

immediately begin the transfer to the Karelian Isthmus of the 4th Infantry Division and the 3rd Infantry Brigade from East Karelia. On June 12, he sent the 17th division and the 20th brigade to the Karelian Isthmus.

By the end of the day on June 13, formations of the 21st Army reached the second line of defense, but they could not break through it on the move, since the enemy managed to occupy it with operational reserves and units that had retreated from the first line of defense.

Considering that the main grouping of Finnish troops was concentrated in the Vyborgskoye highway, Govorov decided to shift the direction of the main attack to the left flank - along the Primorskoye highway. The 110th Rifle Corps was transferred to the 21st Army from the front reserve and about 110 artillery battalions were regrouped.

At dawn on June 14, after a powerful artillery preparation, the Soviet troops began an assault on the second line of defense. Attacks on the coast of the Gulf of Finland were repulsed. The fighting was extremely fierce. But near the village of Kuuterselkya, the 1st Guards Tank Brigade, having made a maneuver around this important center of resistance, managed to break through the front. At night, the Finns brought into battle a tank division under the command of Major General Lagus. However, by morning it was defeated and thrown back 5 km to the north. The Finns lost 25 T-26s. This was the beginning of the breakthrough of the second band.

By June 16, Soviet troops expanded the breakthrough to 75 km and advanced more than 40 km, reaching the third line of defense in the coastal direction. Mannerheim ordered the Finnish troops to retreat and occupy the Vyborg-Kuparsaari-Taipale line. On the same day, the marshal made a difficult, but the only correct decision to surrender the well-fortified Karelian lines almost without a fight and to concentrate the main forces on the Karelian Isthmus to cover the most important vital centers of the country. The right flank of the 4th Army Corps by this time had been thrown back to the water line of the Gulf of Finland - Lake Kuolemajärvi - Lake Perkyarvi, where the 4th division of Major General Auti, who arrived from East Karelia, held back Soviet troops in the direction of the main railway in anticipation of how the situation will develop in the direction of Kivennap. There, 25 km to the south, on the Vammelsuu-Taipale line, the 3rd division of Major General Payari fought. The threat of encirclement hung over her, and the division was withdrawn to the right flank.

By the end of June 17, Soviet troops completely broke through the second line of defense and began to pursue. Mobile detachments, consisting of submachine gunners mounted on tanks, rushed forward, bypassing strongholds and centers of resistance.

On June 18, on the shoulders of the retreating enemy in the coastal direction, they broke into the third line of defense and, breaking through it in the area of the settlement of Murila, captured Koivisto by evening. Progress was also made successfully in the direction of Summa-Vyborg.

On June 19, the "Mannerheim Line" in a section of more than 50 km was occupied by the troops of the Leningrad Front. For outstanding services and skillful command and control of the troops, General of the Army Govorov was awarded the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Despite the critical situation, the Finnish command was still trying to stop the Soviet offensive. Marshal Mannerheim appealed to the troops with an appeal to hold their positions at all costs. In connection with the impending catastrophe, the Finnish government on the same day authorized the Chief of the General Staff, Erik Heinrichs, to address the German military

leadership with a request to provide assistance to the troops. However, instead of the requested six divisions, the German command transferred by sea from Tallinn only the 122nd infantry division and the 303rd assault gun brigade, which were

moved to the Karelian Isthmus. In addition, the 200th German regiment, consisting of Estonian volunteers, arrived in Finland. At the same time, 20 L-87 dive bombers and 10 E-190 fighters flew from Estonian airfields. The Germans could not give more. Finally, it was possible to purchase from Germany 14 R-100 tanks, three "thirty-fours" and 29 assault guns.

In the Vyborg-Vuoksa strip, about 40 km wide, the defense was held by three Finnish infantry divisions and two brigades, and the twice-wide Vuoksa-Suvanto-Taipale strip was defended by two divisions and one brigade. The reserves - a tank brigade, as well as the 10th division assigned for replenishment - were located west of Vyborg, where the Finns expected the main blow of the Soviet troops. The arrival of the 17th, 11th and 6th divisions was expected from Eastern Karelia.

At dawn on June 19, 180-mm Soviet railway batteries opened fire on the city and the Vyborg railway station. And the next day, the troops of the 21st Army overcame the outer and inner Vyborg lines and captured Vyborg by storm. However, the Soviet troops could not advance north of the city due to the stubborn resistance of the 10th and 17th Finnish divisions, as well as the approaching German units.

At the same time, the 23rd Army, with the assistance of the Ladoga military flotilla, reached the enemy's defensive line along the Vuoksa water system on a broad front.

According to the result achieved, the operation of the Leningrad Front was called Vyborg. Soviet and Russian historiography to this day calls June 20 the date of its end. Accordingly, the losses of the front are estimated for 11 days of fighting at 6,000 killed and 24,000 wounded. The fact that for another 20 days the Soviet troops unsuccessfully attacked the Finnish positions on the Karelian Isthmus was not awarded any name, and there were no salutes on this occasion.

Meanwhile, immediately after the occupation of Vyborg, the Headquarters specified the tasks for the troops of the Leningrad Front. The directive of June 21 stated that on June 26-28 the main forces of the front should capture the Imatra-Lappeenranta-Virojoki line, and part of the forces should advance on Kexholm, Elisenvaara and clear the Karelian Isthmus from the enemy northeast of the Vuoksa River and Lake, creating the prerequisites for transferring hostilities directly into Finnish territory. "Fulfilling these instructions," our "History" tells, "Govorov's troops continued the offensive. In fierce battles with the enemy, Soviet soldiers showed skill and mass heroism. However, the resistance of the enemy increased sharply. The 11th and 6th Finnish divisions, as well as the 122nd German division, appeared at the front.

On June 22, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop arrived in Helsinki. He demanded that the Finnish government make a public statement that Finland would fight for Germany to the end. Since the members of the government at that time were trying to establish peaceful contacts with Moscow, on June 26, President Ryti signed and publicly announced a declaration in which he gave a personal commitment to prevent the signing of a separate peace with the USSR without the consent of the government of the "German Empire".

At the end of June, the sailors of the Baltic Fleet carried out an operation to clear the islands of the Björk archipelago from the enemy. The batteries placed on them, which actually ended up in the rear of the Leningrad Front, prevented

the deployment of naval operations in the Vyborg Bay to support the ground forces. In addition, the enemy systematically fired on the highways and railways of the Karelian Isthmus from the islands. The forces of the Finnish garrison holding the islands were estimated at about 3,000 people. The main fortifications were located on the island of Björk and consisted of three dozen guns, including 254 and 152 mm caliber,

a large number of bunkers, mine and wire barriers. True, the heavy Finnish batteries used up a lot of ammunition and could not replenish it due to the blockade of the islands.

In this regard, the commander of the Baltic Fleet was ordered to land troops on the islands and capture them. The command of all landing forces was assigned to Vice Admiral Yu.F. Rall. In preparation for the operation, the trawlers laid a fairway in shallow depths along the mainland coast of the Björkesund Strait. However, there were no mines. At the same time, the light forces of the fleet began to cover the area of forthcoming operations.

For the operation, two battalions of the 260th Marine Rifle Brigade of Major General Kuzmichev were allocated - about 1,500 people with 30 guns. The landing forces included 4 gunboats, 2 patrol ships, 8 armored boats, 12 torpedo and 16 patrol boats, 28 tenders, 24 smoke-screen boats and 28 minesweepers. Artillery support from the shore was to be provided by a battery of 122-mm guns, since due to damage to the railway lines, it was not possible to use powerful railway artillery. Air cover was charged to naval aviation.

Admiral Rall came to the conclusion that the most vulnerable point of the archipelago is the eastern and northern coast of the island of Piisaari. Therefore, he decided to first land troops on this island. After capturing the bridgehead, the main landing forces were to take possession of the island of Piisaari, and then the islands of Björke, Torsari, followed by the capture and cleansing of the entire archipelago. The landing forces were concentrated in the Maisala area on the western tip of the Koivisto peninsula.

On the night of June 20-21, it was decided to conduct force reconnaissance on the island of Piisaari with the forces of one company. The movement of the detachment, which consisted of 3 tenders guarded by 4 KM boats and one armored boat, was masked by the demonstrative exit of another group, supposedly heading for Kronstadt, and then was covered with smoke screens. At 0440, the landing force landed without loss on the island of Piisaari, captured a section 400 m wide and 300 m deep, and moved to all-round defense. The enemy least of all expected a landing in this place, since it was possible to approach the eastern coast of the island only by passing the Björkesund Strait, which was shot through by artillery and mortar fire throughout, and in a number of places by small arms.

Having pulled up their forces, the Finns tried to throw the company into the sea. The successful capture of the bridgehead dramatically changed the situation. Power reconnaissance grew into a landing operation. Reinforcements had to be sent immediately. Parts of the Marine Corps brigade were still on their way to the places of concentration. At the landing site, only one company with a 45-mm anti-tank gun was ready. At 10 o'clock this company, under enemy fire, was transferred across the strait. The position of the reconnaissance detachment improved somewhat.

Soon a detachment of six enemy ships entered the strait from the north. He fired at the landing area, but under the influence of Soviet aviation and artillery, he was forced to hastily retreat to the skerries. Before sunset, the Finns transferred reinforcements from the island of Björke to Piisaari Island and launched a series of counterattacks. The landing party continued to defend stubbornly.

On the morning of June 22, 2 armored boats and 8 tenders with smoke-screen boats broke through to the landing site, and soon the rest of the landing craft and support forces approached. They immediately set about transferring units of the naval infantry brigade from the mainland to the island of Piisaari. By 5 p.m., all detached units landed on the island and, with the support of attack aircraft, launched an offensive in a southerly direction; The Finns put up a decent resistance, repeatedly turning into counterattacks. Heavily rugged terrain, abundantly overgrown with forest,

made it difficult to use artillery in the battle formations of the Marine Corps. The only road along the east coast of the island was under fire from a 152 mm battery from Torsari Island. Only by 2 o'clock in the morning the enemy's resistance began to weaken, his gunners used up all their ammunition. Leaving strong barriers, the Finns, armed with automatic weapons, broke away from the Soviet units and freely evacuated on boats and boats. On the morning of June 23, the island of Piisaari was completely cleared of the enemy.

At the same time, the garrisons of the islands of Torsari and Björke were abandoned. On June 25, after a short exchange of fire with the command of the observation post, the paratroopers occupied the island of Tuppurunsari. On the night of June 27, an operation was successfully carried out to capture the island of Ruonti.

On land, things were much worse. The troops of the Leningrad Front not only failed to reach the line indicated in the directive of the Headquarters, but in general to advance at least a step. Then Marshal Govorov, taking into account the strengthening of enemy forces west of Vyborg, decided to launch a simultaneous attack from the front and from the sea. To solve this problem, the troops of the 59th army of General I.T. were deployed to the Karelian Isthmus at the end of June. Korovnikov, who previously occupied the defense along the eastern shore of Lake Peipus. The army received the task, in cooperation with the forces of the fleet, to seize the islands of the Vyborg Bay, land on the mainland, strike at the coastal flank and rear of the enemy's Vyborg grouping, and link up with the troops of the 21st Army. The Baltic Fleet allocated a brigade of skerry ships, 64 boats and tenders, and the 1st railway artillery brigade. The command of these forces was again entrusted to Admiral Rall, who was simultaneously appointed deputy general Korovnikov for the naval unit. Considering the islands of Teikarsaari and Suonisaari as the key to the enemy's island position, the commander of the 59th Army decided to capture them first.

On July 4.501, the Soviet landing force, consisting of one battalion of the 185th Infantry Regiment and a reconnaissance company of the 260th Naval Brigade, overcame strong enemy resistance, landed on the southern part of Teikarsaari Island. The landing was preceded by artillery preparation, the landing operations were supported by ground attack aircraft, naval and coastal artillery.

The Finnish command, realizing the importance of the outer islands of the Vyborg Bay for the stability of its right flank, prepared maneuver groups to reinforce the garrisons on these islands and the necessary vehicles. Therefore, soon after the landing on the island of Teikarsaari, it was able to quickly transfer reinforcements here and counterattack to force the Soviet landing "to return landing."

The failure did not cool the ardor of the commander of the 59th Army. General Korovnikov, having confirmed his decision to capture the islands of Teikarsaari and Suonisaari, considered it necessary to capture the island of Revansaari simultaneously with them. He ordered the preparation of larger landings and the landing of one regiment on each of the first two islands. Artillery and assault aviation were to ensure the deployment of forces, their landing and advancement. To capture the island of Revansaari, another rifle regiment was allocated, the landing of which was supposed to be ensured by the engineering units of the 59th Army, since the shallow water excluded the possibility

the use of fleet resources here.

By July 3, 108 tenders, ferries, boats and armored boats were concentrated for landing troops in the bays of the southern coast of the Vyborg Bay. Considering the experience of the previous landing, the landing commander had a reserve of an assault battalion and 10 boats. By this time, the 224th Rifle Division, taking advantage of the proximity of some islands to the southeastern shore of the bay, occupied them.

At 9 o'clock on July 4, the landing forces, reaching the Transund raid, began to deploy. After artillery and aviation preparation at 11 o'clock the landing

landed on the islands. By 16.50 Suonisaari and the neighboring island of Essisaari were completely cleared of the enemy. The situation was more complicated on the island of Teikarsaari, located close to the southwestern mainland coast of the bay, from where the enemy was able to quickly transfer reinforcements. The 160th Rifle Regiment, which managed to reach the opposite coast of the island shortly after landing, suffered heavy losses. Going on the offensive, the Finns knocked out, dropped the regiment into the bay. From the landing of the reserve assault battalion, the commander of the landing forces, assessing the situation,

refused.

On the morning of the next day, five battalions of the 124th Infantry Division and four T-26 tanks were landed on Teikarsaari Island. Attempts by the Finns to throw in reinforcements this time were vigorously suppressed by aircraft and armored boats.

By July 6, all the islands of the Vyborg Bay were cleared of the enemy. However, the operation was greatly delayed and the landing on the mainland had to be abandoned. Moreover, this action clearly did not promise success, and the 21st Army in the first ten days of July was able to advance only 10-12 km northwest of Vyborg. By that time, the 23rd Army had eliminated the bridgehead on the southern bank of the Vuoksa River and captured a small bridgehead on its northern bank.

The resistance of the enemy on the Karelian Isthmus was intensifying more and more. By mid-July, up to three-quarters of the Finnish army was operating here. Its troops occupied the line, which 90 percent passed through water obstacles that had a width of 300 m to 3 km. This allowed the Finns to create a strong defense in narrow defiles and have strong tactical and operational reserves.

"The further offensive of the Soviet troops on the Karelian Isthmus in these conditions could lead to unjustified losses," the "History of the Second World War" tells us. "Therefore, the Headquarters ordered the Leningrad Front from July 12, 1944 to go on the defensive at the reached line." Yes, when was Comrade Stalin afraid of losses? The attack simply fizzled out.

The losses of the Leningrad Front amounted to about 86,000 people killed and wounded, that is, more than half of the original composition.

The history of the "destruction" of the Finnish battleship, typical of the system of fraud that has developed in the Soviet country, belongs to the same period. During the landing operation, aerial reconnaissance reported that the Finns had sent their most powerful ship to the Vyborg Bay - the Väinämäinen coastal defense battleship, which had been unsuccessfully hunted for two wars. The Soviet side searched for the ship by all possible means, the Finnish side hid it just as carefully. Finally, the long-awaited target was found standing in the Kotka base. The pilots themselves tried to convince the command that the ship in the developed photographs did not look like an armadillo at all, but the authorities really wanted it to be the elusive Väinämäinen. That's what they decided on.

July 12 30 Pe-2 dive bombers under the command of Hero

Soviet Union Guard Colonel V.I. Rakov, covered by 24 Yak-9 fighters, attacked the ship. 70 FAB-500 and FAB-100 bombs were dropped. However, none of them hit the target. Then it was decided to conduct a special operation, in the development of which the Commander of the Fleet Aviation, Major General M.I. Samokhin. 132 aircraft were allocated for the operation, consolidated into two attack and four support groups. Samokhin appointed either regimental commanders or their deputies to command the groups. For three days, the pilots trained in precision bombing at a point target. Finally, on July 16, the attack was repeated in accordance with all the rules of the "air charter". Fighters provided clear skies, attack aircraft attacked air defense systems, a demonstrative group simulated false attacks, dive bombers dropped more than 60 high-explosive bombs weighing from 100 to 250 kg on the target, two pairs

topmasts from a height of 30 meters dropped six 1000-kg bombs. The enemy ship, having received at least four hits, first rolled over, then capsized and sank.

To celebrate, the commander of the fleet, Admiral V.F. The tribune signed six submissions for the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Much later it turned out that the "heroes" had destroyed not the Finnish battleship Vainemäinen, but the German air defense cruiser Niobe, which was a low-speed barge built in 1900 armed with eight 105-mm anti-aircraft guns and twenty-five 40-mm machine guns. Soviet sources report one lost aircraft, the Germans claim that they shot down about a hundred aircraft in two raids. The truth, as always, is somewhere in the middle. But there is a discrepancy between the material resources spent and the results achieved. Although, it is very likely that for the sake of the Golden Stars, everything and

started.

Thus, as a result of the Vyborg operation, Soviet troops advanced 110-130 km and forced the enemy to transfer significant forces from South Karelia to the Karelian Isthmus. This changed the balance of forces in favor of the left wing of the Karelian Front and thus created favorable conditions for the success of the Svir-Petrozavodsk operation.

The Karelian Front, which included five combined arms and one air army, belonged to the number of "long-livers". Created in August 1941, it had already existed for three years within the territorial limits allotted to it. Since the Finnish troops "due to the large numerical superiority" managed to occupy South Karelia, reach the Svir line and capture Petrozavodsk, cutting off traffic along the Kirov railway and the White Sea-Baltic Canal, there have been no changes since December 1941. The Finns "couldn't achieve more." The troops of the Karelian Front, respectively, "heroically" held the defense, but after an unsuccessful experience in the winter of 1941/42, they themselves did not show offensive initiative, limiting themselves to throwing sabotage groups and partisan detachments behind enemy lines. Active hostilities were conducted only in the Arctic, where German troops operated.

The troops and commanders of the front, having stood for a long time on the defensive, had no experience in organizing and conducting large-scale offensive operations. Therefore, turning his eyes to the north, Stalin first of all in February 1944 changed the entire command of the Karelian Front. Instead of Colonel General V.I. Frolov, who was sent to rear work, was arrived by General of the Army Meretskov. He brought with him the field administration of the liquidated Volkhov Front, whose officers replaced their predecessors, with rare exceptions, in all posts. The new commander was given a specific task: to prepare troops for offensive operations and to present a development to defeat the German-Finnish

troops in Karelia and in the Petsamo region during the summer-autumn campaign.

At the end of February, Meretskov presented to the Stavka his thoughts on the forthcoming actions. It was proposed to inflict the main blow on the Kandalaksha sector of the front towards the border of Finland and further along its territory to the Gulf of Bothnia, cutting off most of the German troops from the Finnish army. After reaching the bay, the blow developed to the south, against the Finns. An auxiliary strike was planned in the Murmansk direction.

The headquarters in response ordered, without waiting for the receipt of directives, to begin preparations for the operation. However, in May, plans changed: the Supreme Commander decided to conduct an operation in South Karelia simultaneously with the strike on the Karelian Isthmus. General Colonel A.F. Khrenov, according to Meretskov, describes the results of the meeting in the Kremlin: "Comrade Stalin listened to everyone carefully, then put his hand on the card, covered

finger Lodeynoye Pole and said: "We will advance here. As soon as our troops reach the Loimala station, Finland will withdraw from the war." On this, as you understand, the dispute was settled.

The new plan was to defeat the grouping of Finnish troops between Onega and Ladoga lakes with blows from two directions. The main blow was delivered by the 7th Army from the area of Lodeynoye Pole in the general direction of Olonets, Sortavala. The troops of the 32nd Army were to advance from the area northeast of Medvezhyegorsk in the direction of Suoyarvi, and part of the forces - to Petrozavodsk. The remaining troops of the front - the 14th, 19th and 26th armies - were in readiness to go on the offensive in the event of the transfer of German troops from Central to South Karelia. The Ladoga and Onega flotillas were ordered to assist the advance of troops along the coasts and land troops.

The start of the operation was scheduled for June 25. However, on June 9, in connection with the upcoming offensive of the Leningrad Front on the Karelian Isthmus, Stalin ordered Meretskov to be ready in ten days.

As early as the autumn of 1941, the Finns began to create a powerful defense in depth in South Karelia, especially between the Onega and Ladoga lakes. Its improvement continued continuously until the summer of 1944. The defense had six lanes and a number of cut-off positions.

The first lane ran along the boundary of Oshta, Svirstroy and further along the Svir River to Lake Ladoga. Its leading edge was covered with anti-tank obstacles, multi-lane wire barriers and minefields. The basis of the strip was the strongholds for the company-battalion and the centers of resistance for the regiment. Sections of continuous trenches of two or three lines were firmly covered with wood, and in swampy areas wood-earth fortifications were built in the form of walls and fences, reaching a height of two meters. Near the river bank, special slingshots entangled with barbed wire were flooded in many places. The areas most convenient for forcing were heavily mined. Both at the forefront and in the depths there were bunkers and armored caps with machine guns and guns installed in them. The defensive system included a number of fortified areas, the most important of which was Olonets, located on the right flank of the second zone.

The remaining lanes between Onega and Ladoga lakes were equipped similarly. In general, the depth of the enemy defense in this direction reached 200 km. To the north of Lake Onega, the Finns equipped two lanes and a number of intermediate lines in the depths. And here the defense system included a number of fortified areas, the most powerful of which was Medvezhyegorsk. However, the presence of a large number of insurmountable natural obstacles did not allow the creation of a continuous front in this area. The defense was built mainly

way to cover certain areas.

In addition, the very terrain of South Karelia greatly hampered the conduct of offensive operations: an offensive by large masses of troops was excluded, it was impossible to effectively use heavy equipment, maneuver was difficult, enemy reconnaissance and command and control became more complicated.

All these large-scale defensive measures are, of course, another clear confirmation of the "aggressive aspirations of the Finnish military."

The fortifications on the isthmus between Lake Ladoga and Onega were occupied by the "Olonets" operational group consisting of the 5th (11th and 17th infantry divisions, 20th infantry brigade) and 6th (5th and 8th infantry divisions, 15th Infantry Brigade) of the army corps and the Ladoga Coastal Defense Brigade - 76,000 soldiers and 580 guns.

The Finns were opposed here by the 7th Army under the command of Lieutenant General A.I. Krutikov, who, according to Meretskov, "was a military man to the bone

man." The army included 6 rifle divisions (21st, 67th, 114th, 272nd, 314th and 368th), 3 marine brigades (3rd, 69th and 70th) and 2 fortified areas. In June, the Stavka transferred here the 37th Guards, formed from airborne units, the 99th and 94th Rifle Corps, the 7th breakthrough artillery division, the 7th Guards and 29th tank brigades, three separate tank regiments and three heavy self-propelled artillery regiment, a separate company of armored vehicles, a guards brigade of rocket-propelled mortars, the 40th anti-aircraft artillery division, sapper units. The 127th light rifle corps was sent from the reserves of the front from the Kandalaksha direction to the Svir. Two such corps were formed on the Karelian front from naval infantry, separate ski brigades and ski battalions. They were intended for an offensive on hard-to-reach terrain and, unlike conventional formations, did not have any transport: weapons, artillery, mortars, and ammunition were transported in packs.

Krutikov's army was supposed to strike the main blow from Lodeynoye Pole along the shore of Lake Ladoga to Olonets, Pitkyaranta and Sortavala. This made it possible to interact with Rear Admiral V.S. Cherokov and use the roads available in this direction, suitable for the movement of heavy equipment.

In the area west of Belomorsk to Lake Onega, the Maselskaya task force was defending, consisting of three infantry divisions and one infantry brigade, which were part of the 2nd Army Corps, as well as an infantry division and a separate border battalion, subordinate directly to the High Command. On the right flank, Finnish positions passed along the southern outlet of the White Sea-Baltic Canal. Here were the 1st and 6th Infantry Divisions, the 21st Infantry Brigade.

On the Soviet side, they were opposed by the 32nd Army of Lieutenant General F.D. Gorelenko, who was to use the forces of three rifle divisions (289th, 313th and 176th) and a tank regiment to deliver an auxiliary strike towards Medvezhyegorsk, Yustozero, Suoyarvi, towards the 7th Army.

In total, 16 rifle divisions, two fortified areas, three rifle and two separate tank brigades were allocated for participation in the operation - 202,000 soldiers and officers, about 4,000 guns and mortars, more than 300 tanks and self-propelled guns. Air support was to be carried out by 588 aircraft of the 7th Air Army and on the first day during the crossing of the Svir by part of the forces of the 13th Air Army.

In preparation for the operation, the main forces were concentrated in the zone of the 7th Army: 70% of rifle formations, 83% of artillery, 94% of tanks of the total number of troops involved in the offensive. The width of the Svir in this place reached 300-400 m, the depth was 5-7 m. The 1st and 20th assault engineer brigade, two separate motorized pontoon-bridge battalions, and a hydraulic engineering company, a separate fleet of engineering vehicles and an operational group of the military geological detachment. In addition, two days before the start of the operation, the 13th engineer-sapper brigade and the 30th motorized pontoon-bridge battalion from the front reserve, as well as a separate company with six self-propelled ferries with a carrying capacity of 16 tons from the Stavka reserve, were supposed to approach. Finally, the Ladoga military flotilla allocated five tenders and two tugboats with 600-ton barges. The engineering services of the army and the front prepared thoroughly and tastefully for crossing the river.

They also drew the attention of the command to the powerful Svir-3 hydroelectric complex located above the place of the planned crossing, which was in the hands of the enemy. The dam, creating a level difference of 18 meters, held 125 million cubic meters of water. Calculations have shown that in the event of opening the gates or a sudden explosion of the dam, a four-meter shaft of water will roll along the river, capable of powerful

wash away any crossing with hydraulic shock. Therefore, the engineers proposed to destroy the dam themselves before the start of the operation. True, the command, according to the testimony of the commanders of the front, "doubted that the enemy would decide on an instantaneous explosion of the dam," but nevertheless decided not to let things take their course. To approve the plan for the destruction of a valuable national economic object, Meretskov had to go to Moscow to prove the military necessity of such an action. In the end, Comrade Stalin gave the go-ahead.

The fulfillment of this task was entrusted to the aviation of the Baltic Fleet. 55 bombers were brought in to destroy the dam. Their crews were trained at a specially equipped training ground, after which the aircraft concentrated in the Novaya Ladoga area. On June 18, targeted bombing and heavy artillery firing at the dam gates and sluice gates began. In the upper reaches, floating mines were lowered down the river. Only by the evening of the 20th, the desired "effect was achieved": the dam was damaged in three places, the river level rose by two meters.

Carried away by such interesting things in their own "kitchen", the command of the Karelian Front did not notice that the enemy forces opposing them had more than halved. In accordance with the order of Mannerheim, the troops were loaded into trains and departed for the Karelian Isthmus, where the fate of Finland was decided. The 4th and 6th Infantry Divisions disappeared from the Maselskaya group. Under the nose of General Krutikov, the 5th Army Corps quietly withdrew from its positions. The line on the Svir was left to defend the 5th and 8th infantry divisions and the 15th infantry brigade. Only on the night of June 20, Commander-7 received a report that the enemy in the strip from Lake Onega to Svirstroy was beginning to roll up the bridgehead. Having received permission from the front commander, Krutikov ordered the formations located on the right flank to start pursuing the enemy, force the Svir on his shoulders in the Podporozhye region and capture the second enemy defense line on the northern coast. The persecution began on the morning of June 20, but it turned out to be a difficult task. The Finns left numerous barriers behind them, their cover units resisted with great ferocity.

In the meantime, preparations for forcing were completed in the main strike zone.

Exactly at 8 o'clock in the morning on June 21, a volley of guards mortars was fired. At 0805, several hundred bombers and attack aircraft appeared over the Finnish positions.

At 0840, 1595 guns and mortars opened fire. In the breakthrough area, the average density was 164 trunks per kilometer of front. Artillery preparation lasted three and a half hours. Tanks and self-propelled guns hit the opposite bank with direct fire.

During the artillery preparation in the area of Lodeynoye Pole, in order to reconnoiter the targets, a demonstrative crossing of troops through the Svir was carried out. Sixteen volunteer soldiers from the 300th regiment of the 99th division and the 296th regiment of the 98th division rushed into the water and, pushing rafts and boats with stuffed people in front of them, began to slowly cross the river. The Finns immediately opened fire, which made it possible to identify their surviving firing points. The guards reached the opposite bank and started a fight there. The most amazing thing is that all of them survived and a month later they were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

At a quarter to twelve, 360 bombers and attack aircraft of the 7th and 13th air armies struck again at the Finnish positions. Then a 15-minute fire raid was carried out by artillery. At the same time, the crossing of the Svir began.

To solve this problem, a significant number of airborne crossing facilities were concentrated, on which up to 20 rifle battalions with weapons could be transported by only one flight.

Having crossed first, the reconnaissance and support echelon made passages in the barriers and captured the edge of the opposite bank. Following him, in a strip four kilometers wide on floating vehicles, landing boats and tenders, units of the first echelons of the rifle divisions of the 37th Guards Corps crossed the river. Within two hours, landing vehicles under indiscriminate machine-gun and mortar fire of the enemy made 4-6 flights. By 13 o'clock, part of the engineering troops brought 11 through the Svir, and by the end of the day 20 ferry crossings. Behind the infantry began the transfer of tanks and self-propelled guns. The crossing was supported with fire by a detachment of armored boats of the Ladoga flotilla that had risen up the river.

Artillery and aviation plowed up the coastal strip to such an extent that the landing of troops was carried out almost without hindrance. "A stunning picture opened up to our eyes," recalled the former commander of the regiment of the 100th Guards Division, General Kh.L. Kharazia. "Everything around is burning and smoking. Enemy defenses from the river five kilometers deep are pitted with bombs and shells. Guns and mortars, mangled and burnt, lay on their firing positions. The trenches and communication passages are destroyed. The few surviving soldiers and officers of the enemy are so shocked that they have lost the ability to any kind of resistance. They stand with their hands up and shake. The trenches are literally littered with the bodies of enemy soldiers and officers. And in the pillboxes, to our considerable surprise, we found the corpses of enemy soldiers, on which there were no signs of wounds. But everything is blue. They were killed by an explosive wave from our rockets, which penetrated through the embrasures into the pillboxes.

On the very first day of the operation, the strike force of the 7th Army broke through the main enemy defense line on a 12-kilometer front, advancing to a depth of 6 km. Having passed through the battle formations of the divisions of the first echelon, the mobile group rushed forward with the task of reaching the deep rear of the enemy. But she didn't succeed. The tanks sat down in the swamp, the cars following them blocked the only road. Rifle regiments had to drag themselves to the intended line through swamps and rocks, carrying military equipment and ammunition on their own.

On June 22, the troops of General Krutikov continued their offensive. At noon, units of the 368th Rifle Division, pursuing the enemy in the Podporozhye direction, broke through to the river in the Voznesenye area and crossed it on the move using improvised means. The infantry was supported by fire from the ships of the Onega flotilla. 99th Rifle

the corps captured the regional center of Podporozhye and also crossed the river. By the end of the day, the Svir was crossed along its entire length from Lake Onega and Lake Ladoga. The main grouping, despite the increased resistance of the enemy, managed to expand the bridgehead on the Svir River to 60 km along the front and up to 12 km in depth.

The Finnish command began to withdraw the 8th and 5th divisions and the 15th brigade to the second line of defense. The withdrawal was covered by strong rearguards.

The troops of the 32nd Army also began active operations a day ahead of schedule. On June 20, General Gorelenko ordered a reconnaissance in force on the sector of the 313th and 289th divisions, and as a result it became known that the Finnish units were the 1st

the infantry division and the 21st brigade are regrouping and preparing to withdraw. Soviet troops were ordered to pursue the enemy. On the night of June 21, the forward units of the 313th Infantry Division crossed the White Sea-Baltic Canal and with a sudden blow knocked the enemy out of the first line of defense. Then the main forces of the division crossed the canal. On the afternoon of June 21, Soviet troops liberated Povenets and rushed along forest paths to Medvezhyegorsk. The 176th and 289th Rifle Divisions wedged into the enemy defenses and by the evening fought out to Lake Vozhema and the Malyga station. On the first day, units of the 32nd Army covered 16 km, but near Medvezhyegorsk they got stuck for almost two days. Only with the approach of the 289th Infantry Division, on June 23, the city was taken by a joint attack from the north and east.

Retreating, the Finnish troops mined and destroyed roads and forest paths, blew up bridges, and made massive blockages in the forests. Natural and artificial obstacles were flexibly combined with skillful maneuvering and stubborn resistance. In the rear of the Soviet troops, groups of sniper-observers with radio stations were left, who shot first of all the officers and informed their command about all the actions of the enemy. The offensive of the Karelian Front slowed down sharply.

The headquarters in the directive of June 23 expressed dissatisfaction with the slow pace of progress and demanded more decisive action. No wonder, after all, sixteen divisions and three brigades of Meretskov, supported by three hundred tanks and self-propelled guns, heavy artillery and all the power of aviation, were opposed by three Finnish infantry divisions and two brigades. The front commander was ordered by the main forces of the 7th Army to vigorously develop the offensive in the direction of Olonets, Pitkyaranta and part of the forces in the direction of Kotkozero, Pryazha, in order to prevent the enemy grouping operating in front of the right flank of the army from retreating to the north-west, and in cooperation with the 32nd army, which was supposed to advance with the main forces on Suvilahti and part of the forces on Kondopoga, to liberate Petrozavodsk.

But from the morning of June 23, the 4th and 37th rifle corps of the 7th Army continued to fight stubbornly in the foreground zone of the second line of the Finnish defense. Only the right-flank 99th Corps, leaving Podporozhye behind, successfully continued the offensive without meeting organized resistance. In marching columns, the troops moved along the forest road to Kotkozero and reached the Petrozavodsk-Olonets highway.

On June 23, the 32nd Army liberated Medvezhyegorsk with a joint strike of three divisions and continued its offensive against Petrozavodsk.

On the same day, the Ladoga flotilla, supported by about 300 aircraft of the fleet aviation, landed in the interfluvium of the Tuloks and Vidlitsa, in the rear of the enemy's Olonets grouping, a landing force with the task of cutting the enemy's most important land communications, thereby depriving him of the possibility of bringing reserves to the lakeside sector of the front. In addition, an amphibious landing in this area was supposed to create

the threat of encirclement of the Olonets group of Finns and force them to throw their units from other sectors against the landing forces. To cover up his actions on

Front aviation stood out on the coast - 3 assault and 2 bomber aviation regiments. The landing of two echelons of the 70th separate marine rifle brigade - 3667 people - under the command of Lieutenant Colonel A.V. Blaka

provided 78 combat and auxiliary ships and vessels.

At 5 o'clock in the morning, gunboats, armored boats and aviation processed the landing site. The attack turned out to be unexpected for the enemy, and the forward detachments entrenched themselves on the shore without much difficulty. At 0920 hours, under the cover of artillery fire and smoke screens, the first echelon of troops finished landing. By 2 p.m., despite the growing opposition, troops of the second echelon approached and began to land. In total, 3159 people landed on the shore. On the very first day, the naval brigade captured a bridgehead 4.5 km along the front and 2 km in depth, saddling the railway and highways from Olonets to Pitkyaranta.

The Finns urgently sent units of the 15th Infantry Brigade and a separate Jaeger Battalion to the landing site. By the end of June 23, with the support of an armored train, they tried to drop troops into the lake with strong counterattacks. By noon on June 24, alarming reports of a crisis situation began to arrive, Lieutenant Colonel Blak asked for reinforcements of men and ammunition. As if on purpose, the weather deteriorated sharply, the aircraft could not take off, and the entire burden of supporting the landing fell on armored boats and gunboats. By order of the commander of the flotilla, the gunboats

boats transferred 60% of their ammunition to the shore. However, the forces of the brigade were still not enough to hold back the onslaught of the enemy. The situation was saved by the urgent delivery to the bridgehead by 4 p.m. of three thousand soldiers of the 3rd Marine Brigade. As a result, all enemy attacks were repulsed.

At this time, General Krutikov regrouped forces, pulled up artillery and proceeded to break through the second line of defense.

The landing of a large landing in the rear of the Finnish troops and bypassing them by the troops of the 99th Corps created a real threat of encirclement of the 5th and 8th Infantry Divisions. Therefore, on the night of June 24, the enemy command was forced to begin withdrawing its units to the western bank of the Vidlitsa. Covering the retreat, the Finns at 18.00 carried out a massive artillery raid, which lasted almost four hours, on infantry regiments prepared for the attack and following in columns to the deployment lines. The Soviet units suffered significant losses and were forced to postpone the start of the offensive in the morning. It turned out that it was not without reason that on the approaches to the fortified lines the entire territory was marked with special signs painted on stones and trees and indicating pre-shot points. As soon as the Soviet unit was close to such a sign, the Finns, having received a message from the observers, immediately opened fire to kill. "Even their automatic bursts sometimes had a hidden meaning," Kharazia is surprised. "Their code "served both as reports of our progress and as a guide to enemy battery fire." In addition, the "cuckoos" of all breeds and stripes literally went berserk, in general - "the enemy excelled in insidious tricks."

Having broken the resistance of the rearguards, units of the 37th Guards Corps, Lieutenant General P.V. Mironov, with the 29th tank brigade attached to them and the 372nd self-propelled artillery regiment, occupied Olonets on June 25. At midnight on June 27, the advanced units of the 7th Army, having joined with the landing force in the Vidlitsa area, began pursuing the enemy in the direction of Pitkyaranta.

On the same day, they entered Nurmolitsy, on June 28 and 29 they fought with units of the 8th Infantry Division in the Torosozero area, and on June 30 they went to Vidlitsa between Ivaselga and the Big Mountains. By June 30, the 99th Corps was fighting in the Vedlozero area. The 4th Corps occupied the strong centers of resistance of Sarmyagi and Obzha and quickly advanced along the shore of Lake Ladoga.

"Overcoming a relatively short distance from Lodeinoye Pole to Olonets required a huge effort," recalls General Khrenov. - For one kilometer of the front there were twelve pillboxes and bunkers. And it fell to the sappers to neutralize 40 thousand mines. This offensive was difficult and long ... "To fight the" brutalized "Finnish snipers, the troops deployed in chains and carried out continuous combing of the treetops with fire. For some reason, it was believed that the "cuckoos" were sitting there, although not a single experienced sniper, if he was not a suicide, would climb a tree. In such a "battle", the 301st regiment of the 100th Guards Division alone used up three rounds of ammunition in a day, and the regiment commander reported in his own defense that "in just one day we knocked down more than fifty" cuckoos "from the trees (!).

Parts of the 15th brigade and the 5th division of the Finns withdrew behind Vidlitsa and took up defensive positions on its western bank.

On June 28, the right-flank formations of the 7th Army and units of the 32nd Army advancing from the north along Lake Onega approached Petrozavodsk. At the same time, the Onega military flotilla landed a battalion of marines 25 km south of the city, which was the first to enter Petrozavodsk, abandoned by the Finns. The Kirov railway was cleared of the enemy along its entire length.

With the entry of the 7th Army troops to the Vidlitsa River on June 30, the first stage of the offensive in the Svir-Olonets direction ended. On the right flank of the army, the Soviet

troops after crossing the Svir pursued the retreating Finns in the direction from Voznesenye to Sheltozero and Petrozavodsk. The Stavka withdrew the 94th Rifle Corps, which was never put into battle, from the Karelian Front.

On July 2, the 37th Guards Corps resumed its offensive on the Vidlitsa River and successfully overcame it. Two days later, Soviet strike units approached the Tulemajoki River. Only three days later, having broken the stubborn resistance of the Finns, the corps managed to cross the river and advance another 15-20 km. Opposition from the enemy steadily increased.

Along the coast of Lake Ladoga, the 4th Rifle Corps advanced, which on July 3 also reached Tulemajoki, but could not force it. It was only possible to capture the village and the large railway station of Salmi. To speed up the advance, on July 6, General Krutikov, at the junction between the 4th and 37th corps, brought the 127th light rifle corps into battle. He was given the 7th Guards Tank Brigade. The corps was faced with the task of defeating the enemy west of the village of Uoma and, together with the 4th corps, destroying the Finnish troops in the Pitkyaranta area. And again, pillboxes, gouges, barriers and mines, mines, mines. Meretskov said in his memoirs: "The sapper units perished one after another, and the matter required advancement." Therefore, the most original methods were used. For example, if a minefield was considered anti-personnel, self-propelled guns were launched through it, and fighters followed them along caterpillar tracks. There is also a proven Zhukovsky method: to attack directly on the mines, trying to run across the gaps.

Finally, on July 10, the city of Pitkyaranta was taken. The further offensive was suspended - it was not possible to break through the defense center in the Kitel area, just as it was not possible

neither surround nor destroy a single part of the enemy. As the Soviet troops approached the border, resistance became more and more stubborn. The front line stopped at the Pitkyaranta-Loimola line, that is, almost at the same line where the Winter War ended. The Finns restored and strengthened the old defensive structures here, using the features of the terrain. Krutikov's army unsuccessfully fought against this line for almost a month, but did not advance a single step. About 80 km remained to the Finnish border.

The 32nd Army was solving the difficult task of capturing the Porosozero defense center. Despite the rugged terrain, the army, using special detachments in off-road vehicles, managed to make a roundabout maneuver, which decided the outcome of the case. At 5 o'clock in the morning on July 21, units of the 176th Infantry Division captured Lengenvar and reached the state border of the USSR of the 1940 model, about which Meretskov immediately reported to Stalin.

At the end of July, the troops of General Gorelenko, continuing to pursue the retreating enemy, reached the Loimola-Lengenvara line and even tried to transfer the fighting to Finnish territory. On July 25, the 289th Rifle Division crossed the border and advanced 12 km in the direction of Vikiniemi.

The Finnish command transferred reinforcements from the depths of the country and from the northern sector of the front, and on July 31 launched a counterattack on the flanks. The Soviet units were defeated, driven back from the state border and left the city of Lengenvara, which, of course, was also reported to Comrade Stalin.

After heavy fighting, by August 9, the front had stabilized along the line of Kudamguba, Kuolisma, east of Loymol, Pitkyaranta. The troops of the Karelian Front went on the defensive. Losses in a month and a half of fighting amounted to 63,603 people killed and wounded.

As a result of the operation, Soviet troops defeated the enemy and advanced 110-250 km. Most of the Karelian-Finnish SSR with its capital Petrozavodsk was liberated, the Kirov railway and Belomoro were cleared

Baltic channel. Access to the border of Finland created the prerequisites for accelerating its withdrawal from the war.

However, in fact, the troops of Govorov and Meretskov did not reach the state border of the USSR in any area. The Finns, at the cost of great efforts, managed to stop the Soviet offensive in all directions. The fighting on the Finnish front acquired a positional character. The headquarters began to withdraw troops from here and transfer them to the west, where, as a result of the defeat of Army Group Center, new prospects opened up in the Berlin and Baltic directions. The total losses of the two Soviet fronts and the Baltic Fleet in two months amounted to 294 tanks and self-propelled guns, 489 guns and mortars, 311 aircraft, more than 150,000 people killed and wounded. The losses of the Finnish army were also great: about 12,000 dead, over 50,000 wounded and missing. By the way, the Finns lost 41 tanks and an assault gun in battle, but at the same time managed to replenish their armored fleet with a dozen Soviet "trophies".

It was the battles of the summer of 1944 that led to the fact that in subsequent negotiations with the Soviet Union, the Finnish government managed to avoid demands for unconditional surrender. Stalin was once again convinced that the Finns were ready to defend their land, and a new invasion of Suomi would cost both blood and international complications. The Western allies, who helped her during the Winter War, had their own position on Finland. In addition, the development of events was closely followed by other Scandinavian countries to determine the further foreign policy line in relations with the USSR.

Nevertheless, Finland's future prospects in the war were hopeless. On August 1, President Ryti, the most consistent supporter of German-Finnish cooperation, resigned. Three days later, the Sejm unanimously approved Marshal Mannerheim as President of the Republic. Soberly assessing the situation, the latter declared: "Finland should not follow Germany in everything, it should separate its fate from the fate of the Nazi Reich."

On August 25, the government of Finland, through its envoy in Stockholm, sent Kollontai a written request to resume negotiations on an armistice with the Soviet Union. On the same day, the Finnish ambassador in Berlin was instructed to tell the German government that from now on Finland does not consider herself bound by her earlier obligations. On August 29, the Soviet government announced its agreement to enter into negotiations if Finland broke off relations with Germany and ensured the withdrawal of German troops from its territory within two weeks.

On September 3, Finnish Prime Minister Atti Hackzell addressed the people on the radio, announcing the government's decision to start negotiations on Finland's withdrawal from the war. On the night of September 4, the Finnish government made a radio statement that it accepted the Soviet preconditions, broke off relations with Germany, and agreed to the withdrawal of German troops by September 15. At the same time, the High Command of the Finnish Army announced that it would cease hostilities along the entire front from 8 am on September 4, 1944. In turn, from September 8.005, the Leningrad and Karelian fronts, by order of the Headquarters, ended hostilities against the Finnish troops. On September 8, a Finnish delegation arrived in Moscow.

In the period from 14 to 19 September, negotiations took place, which were conducted by representatives of the USSR and England, acting on behalf of all the United Nations, on the one hand, and the Finnish government delegation, on the other. The Soviet demands remained the same as those put forward in March, only the amount of reparations was halved. The negotiations ended on September 19 with the signing of the Agreement on

truce.

As a result, the entire strategic situation on the northern wing of the Soviet-German front changed decisively. Favorable conditions were created for the liberation of the Soviet Arctic and the northern regions of Norway. As a result of the expulsion of the enemy from the coast of the Gulf of Finland from Leningrad to Vyborg, the conditions for basing the Baltic Fleet improved. He received the opportunity to conduct active operations in the Gulf of Finland and safe access to the Baltic Sea to facilitate operations in the Baltic. A significant part of the forces of the Soviet troops operating on the Karelian sector of the front could now be involved in other directions.

The cessation of hostilities by Finland put the grouping of German troops in the Far North in a position of complete isolation from the rest of the Wehrmacht forces. Germany not only lost one of its most persistent allies, but also found itself at war with him.

According to Soviet conditions, German troops had to leave Finnish territory by September 15, otherwise they had to be interned. However, on the one hand, it was unrealistic to meet the deadline, especially since the bulk of the troops of the 20th mountain army occupied positions not on Finnish, but on Soviet territory, on the other hand, it was hard to imagine that a 200,000-strong group of Germans in Lapland let herself be disarmed. In addition, Hitler

was not at all going to leave his positions in the Arctic, especially the region of Petsamo rich in nickel. By September 14, Germany had evacuated less than half of its troops, mainly from the southern regions of the country, and the 36th and 18th corps had barely begun to withdraw in the Kandalaksha and Kestenga directions. The Soviet Union offered its help in disarmament, but the Finns categorically refused, knowing that they would definitely not be able to send the Red Army back. However, Comrade Stalin also gave an order to Meretskov, which greatly surprised the commander of the Karelian Front, who was not informed about the intricacies of "big politics": do not interfere with the retreat of the 20th mountain army, do not take decisive actions in relation to it, "do not get involved in heavy battles with the retreating parts of the enemy and not exhaust our troops. Stalin understood everything very well, he himself had been engaged in the "disarmament" of the German mountain rangers for three years and so far without much success. But here it was possible to shake the nerves of the Finnish government, accusing it of not fulfilling the agreements and pushing it into a decisive conflict with Germany. Indeed, at that time negotiations were still in full swing in Moscow, and the Leader knew how to find leverage for political pressure.

The Germans themselves gave rise to the deployment of hostilities. Despite Mannerheim's assurances of deep regret at the end of the "German-Finnish brotherhood in arms", the German representatives in Finland were instructed from Berlin to stop all contact with the Finns, who were now regarded as traitors. Accordingly, the Germans began to behave, as in enemy territory.

So, on the night of September 15, they tried to take possession of the island of Gotland, located in the Gulf of Finland. With the help of Soviet aviation, the garrison repulsed the landing. The Finns were even more outraged by the news of the numerous destructions committed by the German troops retreating north. The Finnish army had to use force to hurry the "guests".

On September 30, the 3rd Infantry Corps attacked from the south the positions of the 18th Mountain Corps in the Tornio area. At the same time, the Finns landed an amphibious assault on the open flank of the German troops. Heavy fighting flared up, which was fought by both sides with exceptional tenacity. They ended with the chasseurs breaking through to the north and, waging continuous rearguard battles, retreated through Munio to Norway. On October 8, the Finns captured the city of Kemi, and by the end of the month they occupied Munio. "That was the last

and the darkest chapter in the history of German-Finnish friendship," wrote General Dietmar.

In the northernmost corner of Finland, at the junction of three borders, the Germans held a small piece of territory until April 25, 1945.

The Finns managed to avoid the Sovietization prepared for them by Stalin, not a single Soviet soldier entered the territory of Suomi. And that Moscow had such plans not only in 1939, but also in 1944, is confirmed by the former member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia Milovan Djilas, who described the dinner at Stalin's dacha three years after the end of the war:

"To my left sat the silent Molotov, and to the right the verbose Zhdanov. The latter talked about his contacts with the Finns and spoke with respect about their accuracy in delivering reparations.

"Everything is right on time, in perfect packaging and of excellent quality.

He finished:

- We made a mistake that they were not occupied - now it would all be over if they did.

Stalin:

- Yes, it was a mistake - we looked too much at the Americans, and they would not lift a finger.

Molotov:

"Ah, Finland is nuts!"

"Thus, already as a result of the first four Stalinist strikes, the strong strategic flank groupings of the enemy were defeated and the possibility of delivering crushing blows on his central grouping, which covered the shortest path into the depths of Germany, was obtained. In this situation, the Soviet Supreme High Command began the implementation of the fifth Stalinist strike in Belarus.

FIFTH STALIN IMPACT

"... was inflicted by the troops of the 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts in June-July in Belarus, with the assistance of thousands of Belarusian partisans, against the German Army Group Center.

As a result of the first four Stalinist strikes carried out by the Soviet Army in January-May 1944, strong enemy strategic groupings on the northern and southern wings of the Soviet-German front were defeated and favorable conditions were created for the liquidation of the central grouping in Belarus.

By the end of the third year of the war, the front in Belarus with a length of more than 1100 km passed along the line of Lake Neshchedro, east of Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Zhlobin, along the Pripyat River, forming a huge ledge to the east, an arc around Minsk. At this line, the troops of the Army Group Center under the command of Field Marshal Ernst Busch defended themselves. It included the 3rd tank, 4th, 9th and 2nd field armies, which were supported by the aviation of the 6th air fleet under the command of General Ritter von Greim. In the north, it was joined by the troops of the 16th Army of the Army Group "North", in the south - the 4th Tank Army of the Army Group "Northern Ukraine". In the "Center" group, together with the adjacent formations of neighboring army groups, there were 63

divisions (including 4 armored and 3 motorized) and 3 brigades. They numbered 1,200,000 people, 9,500 guns and mortars, 900 tanks and assault guns, and 1,350 aircraft.

Field Marshal Bush's troops, occupying the so-called "Belarusian balcony" and having a well-developed network of railways and highways for wide maneuver along internal lines, blocked the Red Army's path to Warsaw. When the Soviet troops went on the offensive to the north or south of the "balcony", they could deliver powerful flank attacks.

The German command intended at all costs to keep favorable positions for it on the central sector of the front. It believed that the Soviet troops would be able to inflict only a secondary blow in Belarus, and ruled out the possibility of using a large number of tanks here. The Germans hoped that the wooded

swampy and lake terrain will facilitate their defensive actions, hamper the maneuverability of the Soviet troops and force them to advance along the roads, in the forefront of the strongest defensive positions. At the same time, it was planned to repel the attacks of the Soviet troops without strengthening the Army Group Center, since all the reserves were preparing to repel the upcoming invasion of France.

In accordance with the basic idea of a defensive operation and in the absence of large reserves, the command of the army group deployed its troops in the tactical zone in one echelon. The main forces concentrated in the areas of Polotsk, Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruisk and Kovel covered the most convenient directions for the offensive. The Germans turned large cities into strong centers of resistance. There were 11 divisions in the operational reserve, partially constrained by the actions of the partisans.

Developed in engineering terms, the defense reached a depth of 250-270 km. In addition to the tactical zone, four lines and several intermediate lanes and cut-off positions were equipped in depth. The most prepared was the tactical defense zone, which had two bands. The main strip, 5-6 km deep, consisted of two, in some places three positions, equipped with full profile trenches, interconnected by communications. At the same time, the conditions of the terrain were skillfully used: the defensive lines passed, as a rule, along the western banks of numerous rivers with wide swampy floodplains. The areas of Vitebsk and Bobruisk were especially heavily fortified.

However, the German command had insufficient reserves here. The operational density of the defense was 30 km per division. Hitler's strict orders to "hold on" deprived the commanders of the freedom of maneuver, many divisions, in accordance with the new strategy of the Fuhrer, were firmly tied to "fortified areas" and "fortresses". In the zone of Army Group Center, the cities of Slutsk, Bobruisk, Mogilev, Orsha, Vitebsk and Polotsk were declared such "fortified areas".

Meanwhile, the liberation of most of Belarus was planned during the winter-spring offensive of the Red Army, when Soviet troops were to reach the Lepel, Minsk, Brest line. However, the grandiose operations in Ukraine absorbed enormous resources, and in the central sector our military leaders, accustomed to fighting in numbers, were not strong enough to defeat the enemy. Repeated attempts to advance in the area of Vitebsk and Orsha were ineffective and paid dearly. General Shtemenko confirms: "The General Staff believed that the main reason for our failures north of Polesie was not so much the strength of enemy positions, but the gross violations by some commanders and staffs of the rules for organizing, supporting and conducting an offensive."

PLAN "BAGRATION"

In April, planning the material support of the summer campaign, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided that the defeat of the German troops in Belarus was the main task of the Red Army in the summer of 1944.

The plan was based on the classic idea of delivering two powerful blows to the foundations of the Belarusian ledge - from the north of Vitebsk through Borisov to Minsk and from the south through Bobruisk also to Minsk in order to defeat the main forces of Army Group Center east of the capital of Belarus.

The experience of unfinished operations of the winter-spring campaign was carefully analyzed. And he said that without a quick and decisive defeat of significant groupings in a number of sectors at the same time, the enemy is able to maneuver,

withdraw your troops to the nearest defensive lines and preserve the integrity of your front. Therefore, when planning the Bagration operation, the Headquarters decided to simultaneously go on the offensive with four fronts in the Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Bobruisk directions, break through the defenses in six sectors, encircle and destroy powerful enemy flank groupings in the areas of Vitebsk and Bobruisk and, developing attacks on converging directions to Minsk, encircle and destroy the main forces of Army Group Center. Subsequently, it was planned to bring in additional forces and go on the offensive on neighboring fronts in order to completely liberate Belarus, Western Ukraine and a significant part of Lithuania and Poland.

The liquidation at the first stage of the Vitebsk and Bobruisk groupings created operational gaps in the enemy defenses 90-100 km wide, through which large forces of mobile troops could break through into the depths without delay. Acting in converging directions to Minsk, they could surround and, in cooperation with the combined arms armies, destroy the large forces of Army Group Center east of Minsk at a depth of more than 200 km. This led to the formation of a strategic gap about 500 km wide, to close which the Germans inevitably had to attract strategic reserves and forces from other directions.

"In other words," explains General A.I. Radzievsky, - in this plan, the idea of the continuous development of tactical breakthroughs into operational ones, operational ones into strategic ones, during which several large enemy groupings were certainly surrounded and destroyed, found a complete expression.

In the plan itself, there was nothing brilliant. After the war, Marshal Zhukov explained to the writer K. Simonov that "... it was enough to look at the map to make it quite obvious that we had to strike from exactly the directions from which we then delivered them, that we are able to create this Belarusian boiler and that in the end it could end in a breakthrough 300-400 kilometers wide, which the Germans would have nothing to plug. The Germans could have foreseen this. The logic of events and elementary military literacy would have prompted them to withdraw their troops from the future cauldron, to reduce and consolidate the front, to create a

their

front operational reserves - in a word, everything that is necessary in such cases. But the Germans did not do this and as a result they were defeated in the Belarusian operation.

In fact, Field Marshal Bush, of course, looked at the map and offered to withdraw troops to the Berezina River, reducing the front by 240 km, but Hitler rejected the offer. He had his own strategic considerations. The Fuhrer was expecting an Allied landing in France, which he expected to repulse with a powerful tank counterattack, and was ready to sacrifice German troops in Belarus to gain time. If the Anglo-American landing does not take place, then the 5 tank divisions concentrated in Poland, including the SS tank corps, will be able to hit the advancing Soviet armies in Belarus or Ukraine and save army groups

"Center" or "Northern Ukraine" from defeat.

Thus, the idea of delivering concentric strikes from the flanks is not original, and Bush, who has long mastered the basics of military science, diligently strengthened them. By the way, Marshal Vasilevsky also believed that the plan was: "...simple and at the same time bold and grandiose. Its simplicity lay in the fact that it was based on the decision to use the configuration of the Soviet-German front in the Belarusian theater of operations that was beneficial for us ... "And the tsarist-Soviet general Brusilov came up with the idea of splitting the front in several places at once. To do this, it was simply necessary to create a colossal superiority in forces over the enemy. And it was created.

In the grouping of Soviet troops involved in the defeat of the army group

"Center", included the 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts, the Dnieper military flotilla, which included 20 combined arms, two tank and five air armies - 172 rifle and cavalry divisions and three brigades, seven fortified areas, 12 tank and mechanized corps, 17 separate tank and self-propelled artillery brigades, 80 separate tank and self-propelled artillery regiments, nine self-propelled artillery battalions. They numbered 2,400,000 officers and soldiers, 36,400 guns and mortars, 5,200 tanks and self-propelled guns, 5,300 combat aircraft, excluding long-range aviation involved (and this is more than 1,000 vehicles).

However, in 1941, the Red Army also had an overwhelming numerical superiority over the Wehrmacht, but then it simply would not have been able to carry out such an operation. This is evidenced by the numerous failed strikes of the initial period of the war. The planning and successful implementation of such an operation as "Bagration" is a sign of qualitative changes in the army, the increased qualification of staffs and command personnel of all levels. The three-year "training" of our commanders can be considered completed. This is confirmed by the opponent:

"...Hitler dismissed all these objections of his military commanders. He refused to see that in the summer of 1944, a completely new Red Army entered the battlefield, and not the one with which he fought in 1941 or 1942. Officers and Red Army men learned important lessons from the 1943 operations. Most importantly, they learned to concentrate their efforts on the directions of the main attacks, to make maximum use of mobile troops and large tank formations. In addition, the Russians did not lack weapons and ammunition ... Turning to Russian patriotism, the Bolshevik system aroused the people to amazing efforts. Not the last role in this was played by military successes in the liberation of vast territories, and Hitler's pernicious occupation policy with its philosophy of "lower races".

In accordance with the general plan, the troops of the 1st Baltic Front were ordered, in cooperation with the 3rd Belorussian Front, to defeat the enemy's Vitebsk-Lepel grouping and liberate Vitebsk. Subsequently, to develop an offensive on Lepel, Siauliai, cutting off Army Group North from Group Center and entering the Baltic in the Klaipeda region.

The troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front were to deliver two blows: one - towards the blow of the 1st Baltic Front and the other - along the Minsk highway to Borisov and part of the forces to Orsha. Further - through Vilnius and Kaunas to the borders of East Prussia.

The 2nd Belorussian Front was supposed to operate in the auxiliary direction of Mogilev, Belynychy and, cutting the 4th field army into two parts, go to the Berezina, and then to the Bialystok region.

The 1st Belorussian Front was to crush the Bobruisk German grouping by delivering two blows: one from the Rogachev area in the direction of Bobruisk, Osipovichi;

the other - from the region of the lower reaches of the Berezina River in the general direction to Slutsk, covering Bobruisk from the south. Subsequently, an offensive was planned for the left wing of the front in the Kovel direction.

Paradoxically, the General Staff during this period diligently avoided the very word "encirclement" in the documents. The liquidation of the Stalingrad cauldron, which dragged on for two and a half months, the failures of the Soviet commanders with the liquidation of the Demyansk or Kamenetz-Podolsk groups made a negative impression on Stalin. German soldiers in the environment showed stamina and

demonstrated high combat skills, chaining to themselves a large number of troops and military equipment. Moreover, in most cases they succeeded either in deblocking or breaking through the encircled forces. From a military point of view, the encirclement and subsequent destruction of the enemy is the desired goal of any operation. But for the Supreme in 1944, it was more important not to destroy manpower in the "boilers", which took time and resources, but to occupy as much territory as possible and transfer military operations to Europe. So they suffered, according to Shtemenko, with the question of what to do after breaking through the enemy defenses:

"It was thought that the defeat of a significant part of the most combat-ready enemy troops would be achieved already during the breakthrough of the defense, the first line of which was especially saturated with manpower. Since the enemy had little reserve of his troops, high hopes were placed on the first fire strike against his tactical zone. For this purpose, the fronts were given such a large number of breakthrough artillery divisions. As for further methods of action, they loomed differently. There were no doubts about the Vitebsk region. Here, the operational position of the Soviet troops made it most expedient to encircle with the simultaneous crushing and destruction of the enemy grouping in parts. In relation to other areas, the term "environment" was not used ...

We had to come up with something new. In particular, the following idea was born: after inflicting a defeat on the bulk of the enemy troops in the tactical depth of his defense with a powerful artillery and air strike, throw their remnants from equipped positions into forests and swamps (?). There they will find themselves in less favorable conditions: we will beat them from the front, from the flanks, from the air (Is it really easier from the front, and even through forests and swamps?) ,, was tantamount to encirclement (???), and we considered this method actions are and partisans will help from the rear (??). According to the results, this definitely beneficial.

The idiocy of this "new idea" was so obvious that, as Shtemenko recalls, "...we were corrected." We decided to surround, where to go.

On May 30, the Stavka finally approved the operation plan. It was decided to start it on June 19-20. The next day, the directive went to the troops.

Coordination of the actions of the troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts was entrusted to the representative of the Headquarters, Chief of the General Staff Marshal Vasilevsky, and the 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts - to the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal Zhukov. In addition, General Shtemenko, Chief of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff, was sent to the 2nd Belorussian Front. Aviation Headquarters representatives were Air Chief Marshal A.A. Novikov and Air Marshal F.Ya. Falaleev.

From the beginning of June, the commanders of the fronts and armies began intensive training, regrouping of troops, creating shock groups, and massing forces and means in the main directions. Up to 160-204 guns and mortars, 15-20 tanks of direct infantry support were concentrated in the breakthrough areas per 1 km of the front. At the same time, unlike previous operations, separate tank brigades and regiments were not used centrally on a divisional scale, but were attached to subunits and rifle regiments, which made it possible to more closely

to organize their interaction with the infantry in the conditions of a wooded and swampy area. Only for the direct support of rifle units, 2229 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations were allocated. Artillery preparation was envisaged for a duration of 120-140 minutes for the entire depth of the main line of defense. On the 1st Belorussian Front, for the first time in the years of the war, support for an attack by infantry and tanks was planned with a double barrage to a depth of 1.5-2 km.

On the night before the offensive, it was planned to conduct a powerful preliminary aviation training, making more than 2,700 sorties. In order to weaken the enemy aviation grouping in Belarus, 6-10 days before the start of the offensive, the ADD conducted an air operation to destroy German aircraft at airfields, in which 8 air corps took part.

During the preparation of the operation, the Headquarters and the command of the fronts organized extensive measures to mask their actions and misinform the enemy. In order to convince him that in the summer of 1944 the Soviet troops would strike the main blow in the south, in May-June a false concentration of troops was carried out in the Kishinev direction. Most of the tank armies were also in Ukraine. From June 20 to June 23, reconnaissance in force was organized in the bands of the 1st Ukrainian, 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts. All this allowed the Soviet command to hide the preparation of the largest operation of the summer campaign. Even a week before the offensive, when, according to General Tippelskirch, the command of Army Group Center became aware of the concentration of significant Red Army forces in Belarus, the German General Staff "remained the dominant point of view, suggesting that the Russians would deliver the main blow on the front of the army group" Northern Ukraine "... At the request of Army Group Center to provide it with at least larger reserves, it was stated that the general situation on the Eastern Front did not allow for a different grouping of forces." As a result, out of 30 tank and motorized divisions of the Wehrmacht on the Soviet-German front, 24 were located south of Pripjat. The enemy was unable to reveal the direction of the main attack of the Soviet troops and failed to prepare to repel it.

Before the operation, Belarusian partisans stepped up their activities. They committed sabotage on communications, obtained intelligence information for the Soviet command, and in the period from June 20 to June 23, they blew up over 40,000 rails. However, the benefits of such actions are often debatable. In pursuit of quantity, the organization of sabotage on communications was turned into a kind of socialist competition. The rails were destroyed and dismantled mainly in secondary areas that the Germans did not use. As the professor of "sabotage sciences" I.G. Starinov, who, in principle, considered the destruction of the railway track to be stupid: "They undermined and cheerfully reported. And at the same time, the Germans themselves removed the rails from the secondary sections for the crossing. They didn't need them here. It's easier for partisans to blow up where they are the masters, and not where the Germans are guarding."

Since the railway could not cope with the huge volume of traffic by the deadline - in June alone it was necessary to deliver more than 75 thousand wagons with people and cargo to the fronts - the start of the operation had to be moved by three days.

Not without the "departmentalism" diagnosed by Rokossovsky. The main role in the operation was assigned to the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts. Therefore, it was these fronts that had the largest number of people and equipment, Vasilevsky and Zhukov were almost constantly here, the problems of the "sponsored" were solved in the first place. The 2nd Belorussian Front operated in an auxiliary sector, supervised by Shtemenko, who did not have the status of a representative of the Stavka and the rank of marshal: "Long-range aviation also brought a lot of unrest. In principle, with its application, everything was clear, but in practice it turned out differently. Two marshals - Zhukov and

Vasilevsky, who organized the fighting on the right and left of the 2nd Belorussian Front, took everything into their own hands. After our persistent requests, Georgy Konstantinovich gave us a certain amount of long-range aviation, but only on paper. In fact, until the very last moment, we did not even have the opportunity to set tasks for heavy bombers - their representatives did not appear at the headquarters of the 2nd Belorussian Front. This force, it seemed, completely fell out of the fire balance of the front. In the end, they agreed that the 1st Belorussian would go over to

offensive a day later than the others, which made it possible to maneuver aircraft from one direction to another.

On June 6, the Allies landed in Normandy. On June 11, German tank divisions moved from Poland to the West. Almost all SS divisions and reserves went there. The Soviet Air Force finally achieved undisputed air superiority, as the Luftwaffe urgently transferred the main forces from the Eastern Front to counter the Anglo-American troops. Only a fifth of all German fighters operated in the East. "Thanks to Eisenhower," says Karel, "Stalin conquered the Russian sky."

Mellendorf generally believes that "the fate of Germany was decided by the successful landing of the Allies in Normandy."

The fate of Army Group Center was sealed.

On June 23, Operation Bagration began - a general offensive in Belarus.

VITEBSK-ORSHA OPERATION

On the right flank, in order to defeat the left wing of Army Group Center, two fronts carried out the Vitebsk-Orsha operation.

As part of the 1st Baltic Front under the command of Army General I.Kh. Bagramyan included the 4th shock, 6th guards, 43rd combined arms and 3rd air armies, numbering 24 rifle divisions, 1 rifle, 1 mechanized, 4 separate tank brigades, 1 fortified area, 1 tank corps, 4 tank and 4 self-propelled artillery regiment - 359,500 people, 4,900 guns and mortars, 687 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations.

The front was supposed to deliver the main blow in a 25-kilometer zone at the junction of Army Groups North and Center with the forces of the 6th Guards Army, Lieutenant General I.M. Chistyakov and the 43rd Army, Lieutenant General A.P. Beloborodov in the general direction to Beshenkovichi, in cooperation with part of the forces of the 3rd Belorussian Front, defeat the Vitebsk-Lepel grouping, force the Western Dvina and reach the Lepel, Chashniki area. The mobile group of the front was the 1st Tank Corps of Lieutenant General V.V. Butkov. The 4th shock army was to advance on Polotsk.

The 3rd Belorussian Front included the 11th Guards, 5th, 31st, 39th combined arms, 5th tank, 1st air armies - 33 rifle, 3 cavalry divisions, 3 tank, 1 mechanized corps, 1 fortified area, 5 separate tank brigades, 5 tank and 16 self-propelled artillery regiments - 579,300 people, 8412 guns and mortars, 689 rocket artillery installations, 1169 tanks and 641 self-propelled installations, 1864 combat aircraft. The former army commander-60, thirty-eight-year-old Colonel-General I.D., was appointed commander of the front. Chernyakhovsky, a rapidly growing talented military leader and a well-known organizer.

The front made two blows: one by the 39th and 5th armies on Bogushevsk, Senno, in order to help defeat the enemy's Vitebsk grouping; the other - by the forces of the 11th

guards and 31st armies on Borisov with the aim of defeating the Orsha grouping in cooperation with the 2nd Belorussian Front. To develop success in the operational depth, mobile groups were created: a cavalry-mechanized group consisting of

3rd Guards Stalingrad Mechanized and 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps and 5th Guards Tank Army; in the 11th Guards Army, the mobile group was the 2nd Guards Tatsinsky Tank Corps. The entry into battle of Rotmistrov's tank army depended on the progress of the breakthrough in the northern or southern strike force and was to be carried out on the personal instructions of Vasilevsky where the operational space for wide maneuver would open up.

The troops of the two fronts were opposed by four army corps of the 3rd tank and 4th field armies, as well as the 1st army corps of the Army Group "North", in total - 16 divisions. Against the front of Chernyakhovsky, the Germans had seven divisions in the first line. It must be said that General Reinhardt's 3rd Panzer Army did not have a single tank or motorized division.

On the eve of the day of the general offensive, reconnaissance in force was carried out on all fronts. On the 1st Baltic, it began at dawn on June 22 after a 20-minute artillery preparation. German resistance was unexpectedly weak. In the course of the battle, the advanced battalions managed to penetrate the defenses to a depth of 1.5 km in some areas and take the first position in places. In the 6th Guards Army in the zone of the 22nd Guards Rifle Corps, to develop success, subunits of the main forces of the regiments of the first echelon were brought into battle, which made it possible by the end of the day to break through the enemy's main line of defense on a front of 15 km and advance to a depth of 5-7 km. The actions of the reconnaissance detachments, undertaken with a limited purpose, led to the fact that the enemy defense and fire system were seriously disrupted even before the main forces were brought in. The design of the front edge has also changed.

All this required changes to the plans for the artillery offensive. In Chistyakov's army, the duration of artillery preparation was reduced by half, and the amount of artillery involved in it was reduced.

On the 3rd Belorussian Front, reconnaissance in force was carried out in the afternoon of June 22. The forward battalions captured the first position two hours later. Parts of the first echelon were introduced into the battle, which advanced to a depth of 3.5 km. In the strip of other armies, success was much less. On the whole, reconnaissance in force confirmed that the enemy's defenses in the Orsha direction were much stronger than in the Bogushan direction.

On the night of June 23, long-range aviation and front-line bombers made about 1,000 sorties, striking enemy defense nodes in breakthrough areas. Due to adverse weather conditions, it was not possible to use aviation to its full potential at the initial stage of the operation.

On the morning of June 23, artillery preparation was carried out, and then the main forces of the fronts went on the offensive. 4th Shock Army Lieutenant General P.F. Malysheva, who was operating in the Polotsk direction, made almost no progress. Rifle formations of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies, bypassing Vitebsk from the northwest and accompanied by tanks of direct infantry support and self-propelled guns, with the support of artillery and aviation, broke the resistance of two German infantry divisions of the 6th Army Corps and began to quickly move in depth. The front commander gave the order to bring the 1st tank corps, which had 297 combat vehicles, into the breakthrough. However, after the past rain, which spoiled the roads, the extension of the hull was slow. To enter it, it would be necessary to free up a few roads, which could slow down the advancement of successfully advancing rifle formations and the advancement of crossing facilities to the Western Dvina. Therefore, General Baghramyan amended the plan

offensive and decided to bring the tank corps into action after the capture of the bridgehead on the river by the infantry troops. By the end of the day, the troops of the front had completely completed

breakthrough of the tactical defense zone of the enemy, advanced to a depth of 16 km and expanded the breakthrough to 50 km along the front.

On the 3rd Belorussian Front, the greatest success was achieved in the Bogushev direction. In the area of the main attack of the 39th Army, Lieutenant General I.I. Lyudnikov, half an hour before the end of the artillery preparation, it was noticed that the German units, unable to withstand the powerful artillery fire, began to retreat from the first trench. It was decided to shift the fire in depth and launch an attack along the entire front. Parts of the 5th Guards Rifle Corps quickly took possession of the first and second trenches and on the move captured three serviceable bridges across the Luchesa River. This made it possible by 12 o'clock to cross the river with the main forces of the corps, and an hour later to complete the breakthrough of the enemy's main line of defense. By the end of the day, the corps advanced 14 km and expanded the breakthrough to 20 km along the front. The formations of the 5th Army of Lieutenant General N.I. Krylov, who, using the successes achieved the day before by the forward battalions, completed the breakthrough of the main line with a decisive attack, broke through the second line of defense on the move and advanced 10-13 km. (Commander-5 in his memoirs is "modest", listing in detail each part of the enemy, but without giving any information about his own forces: "The 299th Infantry Division and the 456th Infantry Regiment of the 256th Infantry Division, reinforced by three reserve infantry and two tank battalions, thirteen artillery and two mortar divisions and a division of assault guns". For comparison, Krylov himself had at his disposal 9 rifle divisions, reinforced by two tank brigades, two tank, four self-propelled regiments, the 3rd breakthrough artillery division, two artillery and one mortar brigade.)

Thus, the troops of Lyudnikov and Krylov completely broke through the tactical defense zone in one day and expanded the breakthrough to 50 km along the front. Near Vitebsk, as planned, a "cauldron" was brewing. Since the Germans were ordered to consider it a "fortress", General Gollwitzer and his entire 53rd Army Corps remained in it, following the order of the Fuhrer. Soviet mobile groupings defiled past Vitebsk to the German rear.

On the first day in the Orsha direction, it was not possible to break through the defenses of the 27th Army Corps, which were developed in engineering and fire terms. In a secondary direction, the right-flank formations of the 11th Guards Army, Lieutenant General K.N. Galitsky, advancing on a swampy, poorly covered area, were able to wedge in 4-8 km, and the 31st Army had no success at all. In this regard, the army commander decided to regroup here the second echelons of the two rifle corps advancing in the main direction, and the rifle division from his reserve. Entering them into battle allowed the next day to advance to a depth of 14 km. The actions of the rest of the armies were not successful.

On June 24, both armies of the shock group of the 1st Baltic Front, pursuing the retreating enemy, advanced to a depth of 30 km. They went to the Western Dvina and immediately captured five small bridgeheads on the southern coast. Chistyakov's guards again "surprised" the front command, ahead of schedule by a day and leaving the regular crossing facilities far behind. But the impulse was great, the resistance of the enemy, who did not have time to gain a foothold and organize defense at the water line, was insignificant. In addition, according to established tradition, the soldiers were announced that those who were the first to cross the river would be presented with the title of Hero. The commander of the 6th Guards, who arrived at the scene on the orders of Bagramyan in order to check

the reliability of the report, observed: "... the entire body of water is covered with people! Who is on boards, who is on barrels, who is on logs, who is swimming to the opposite shore. The enemy, on the other hand, conducts only a rare mortar fire ... And what happened

next to us on the beach! Local residents - women, old people, teenagers - demolished their sheds, removed the gates from their hinges and, together with the soldiers, dragged them to the river. One old man in my presence approached the hut, hit the frame with an ax, knocked it out and shouted to the Red Army men: "Come on, guys, take it apart!" In the zone of the 43rd Army, a serious battle had to be fought for the crossings.

With the introduction of another rifle corps of the 6th Guards Army into battle, a common bridgehead was formed with a length of 65 km and a depth of up to 10 km. On June 25, the 1st Panzer Corps crossed over to it, which immediately, in cooperation with rifle units, went into pursuit. On the same day, the troops of the 43rd Army reached the Gnezdilovichi area, where they established direct contact with Lyudnikov's army.

Thus, on the third day of the operation in the Vitebsk region, two infantry and two airfield divisions were surrounded. Hitler gave permission for the 53rd Corps to break through to the west, on the condition that one division should remain and hold the fortress. In any case, this strange order came too late: this time the "ring" was forged strong. Gollwitzer made an attempt to get out of the encirclement and, with part of his formations, went to the area 19 km southwest of the city, but that was all he succeeded. On June 26, Vitebsk was liberated, the 206th Infantry Division of General Gitter, left to continue the defense, was completely

destroyed. The next day, having lost hope of a breakthrough, the Germans accepted the ultimatum and capitulated. They lost 20,000 killed, about 10,000 prisoners, a lot of weapons and military equipment. The commander of the 53rd Army Corps, Gollwitzer, his chief of staff, Colonel Schmidt, and the commanders of the 206th, 246th, and 197th Infantry Divisions surrendered. The corps was completely destroyed, the commanders of the 4th and 6th airfield divisions were killed.

"In 1942, near Voronezh, the young General Chernyakhovsky fought against the elderly General Golwitzer," wrote Ilya Ehrenburg in those days, "Chernyakhovsky learned to fight. This summer, the captured General Gollwitzer was brought to General Chernyakhovsky: Chernyakhovsky had learned to win. The disorganized remnants of the German divisions rolled back behind the Berezina.

The first breach appeared in the defense of Field Marshal Bush.

On the afternoon of June 24, a horse-drawn mechanized group under the general command of Lieutenant General N.S. entered the gap in the 5th Army zone. Oslikovsky - 322 tanks and self-propelled guns. She overtook the infantry, and the next day broke into Senno and cut the Orsha-Lepel railway. Since the troops were stuck between the Dnieper and the swamps in the Orsha direction, the prospect of introducing a tank army here disappeared. Therefore, Marshal Vasilevsky, having agreed on the issue with Stalin, decided to transfer the 5th Guards Tank Army, which had 524 combat vehicles in service, to the Bogushevsk region and from there, using the success of General Krylov, send it, bypassing Orsha from the rear, to Tolochin and Borisov. The decision of the Headquarters to change the direction of its entry was accepted by Rotmistrov without enthusiasm; the tank army, "always brilliant, in this case acted worse than before." Rotmistrov's dissatisfaction is understandable. Since, on the night of July 22-23, the tank army received an order to advance into the 11th Guards zone, according to the first option. Now she had to return back to her original position and march to Krylov, losing a precious day to maneuver.

However, on the morning of June 25, its units entered the breakthrough in the Bogushevsky direction. The actions of the tankers were supported by four air corps and two air divisions of the 1st

Air Army Lieutenant General M.M. Gromov. By the end of the next day, the tankers advanced 50 km, captured the regional center of Tolochin and cut the enemy's communications west of Orsha. With further advancement to Borisov, the army met stubborn resistance from the enemy's 5th Panzer Army, which had arrived from near Kovel.

Events began to develop more actively in the Orsha direction. The command of Army Group Center tried to hold the Minsk highway and strengthen the flank of the 4th Army of General Kurt von Tippelskirch in the Orsha region, transferring two divisions from their reserve there. But it was already too late: on the morning of June 26, the 2nd Guards Tank Corps of Major General A.S. entered the battle in the zone of Galitsky's army. Burdeyny. He bypassed Orsha from the northwest and by evening reached the Minsk highway. The enemy was forced to begin the withdrawal of troops defending south of the city. On June 27, troops of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies liberated Orsha.

In other sectors, mobile groups and rifle units successfully developed the offensive along the entire front, and by the end of June 28 they had reached the Berezina River. The 1st Rifle Corps, with the help of the 1st Tank Corps, took Lepel in a fierce battle. In six days, the troops of Baghramyan and Chernyakhovsky, having defeated the left wing of Army Group Center, advanced from 80 to 150 km, and the breakthrough front reached 200 km.

MOGILEV OPERATION

Simultaneously with the northern neighbors, the 2nd Belorussian Front launched the Mogilev offensive operation. The front included the 33rd, 49th, 50th combined arms and 4th air armies. They numbered 22 infantry divisions, 1 fortified area, 4 separate tank brigades, 1 tank and 10 self-propelled artillery regiments - 319,500 fighters and commanders. They were opposed by three corps of the 4th German Army, which had 8 divisions in the front line, including the 18th motorized. Air Army of General K.A. Rudenko had 528 serviceable aircraft.

In early June, by personal order of Stalin, the front commander, General I.F. Petrov. Petrov was "eaten" by the unforgettable L.3, a member of the Military Council. Mekhlis. Having failed the Crimean operation of 1942 together with General Kozlov, having lost the post of head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, the restless Lev Zakharovich nevertheless did not lose his Bolshevik vigilance and adherence to principles. Wandering from front to front as a PMC, Mekhlis tirelessly scribbled denunciations against his superiors, so he rarely stayed anywhere for more than two months. Somehow he did not like General Petrov either, perhaps because of his too intelligent demeanor. As soon as he received the directive of the Stavka to prepare the Belarusian operation, Mekhlis wrote to Stalin about Petrov's softness, his ill condition and inability to ensure the success of the operation. Stalin heeded the "knock" and sent an absolutely healthy Petrov to a sanatorium. The general was definitely unlucky in 1944: in January he was removed from the Separate Primorsky Army with a reduction in rank, in May he was appointed commander of the front, and after a month and a half he was removed again.

(The fact that it was not a matter of illness is confirmed by the fact that it was General Chernyakhovsky who was ill and, for health reasons, could not even attend the May meeting at Headquarters, where the plan for Operation Bagration was discussed with the front commanders. This did not prevent Chernyakhovsky, who came from the post of commander, to command the 3rd Belorussian, however, under the watchful eye of Vasilevsky. A folk proverb says: "Not good for good, but good for good." To the experienced and competent Petrov, Comrade Stalin "had some kind of biased attitude." But Chernyakhovsky impressed the Leader with his charm.

The commander-in-chief has this one: "Vasilevsky showed Stalin a whole folder of slander against General of the Army Chernyakhovsky. They talked about the fact that he had a lot of women.

- What do we do? Vasilevsky asked.

- What do we do? What do we do? Stalin thought. "We'll be jealous!"

Colonel-General G.F. was appointed commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front. Zakharov, who was considered "a wayward person and excessively hot." This is noted by almost everyone who had the good fortune to serve with him. The former head of the political department of the front, Lieutenant General A.D. Okorokov notes that: "The new commander turned out to be the direct opposite of I.E. Petrov and, it seems to me, was inferior to his predecessor in military erudition. In addition, G.F. Zakharov was unnecessarily harsh with his subordinates. Cavalry General P.A. Belov: "He generously lavished threats, resorted to the most extreme measures ... In general, the commanders tried to avoid meetings with Zakharov."

General Shtemenko, who was responsible for Zakharov's induction and the details of the upcoming operation, was even worried about such a high concentration of "hot people" in one headquarters: "I was very afraid that he would begin to interpret the operation plan already approved by the Headquarters in his own way, complicate relations with the chief of staff of the front, General Lieutenant A.N. Bogolyubov, an experienced worker, but also quick-tempered. In addition, L.3. Mekhlis remained here ... "The fears were not in vain: from the first days, Zakharov, who had never commanded the front on his own before, began to" interpret in his own way, "not giving himself the trouble to visit the area," tried to protest the direction of the main attack "and, "As we expected, he was not slow to announce that before him everything was bad here and that he would have to correct other people's sins for a long time." At a meeting with the commanders of corps and divisions, the commander confirmed his reputation as a commander of the Zhukovsky school. Having embraced everyone in a crowd and each one individually, he announced: "Here I will speak, and you should only listen and write down my instructions." In a word, the front fell into firm hands.

Only the categorical statement of the representative of the General Staff that the plan was approved by the Headquarters and could not be changed without its knowledge, made the commander, who had soared to the heights of strategic planning, calm down and get down to business. However, "Georgy Fedorovich did not hold evil and was quick-witted," but now Lieutenant General Mekhlis had to look for a new "place of work." By the way, Zakharov commanded for about four months and in November was demoted to the post of army commander.

The 2nd Belorussian Front broke through the defenses with the forces of one 49th Army, Lieutenant General I.T. Grishin of a four-corps squad in a 12 km sector with the task of cutting the army of General Tippelskirch into two parts and depriving the enemy of the opportunity to withdraw forces from the central direction to stabilize the situation on the flanks. The neighbors were ordered to hold their lines and be ready to move on to pursue the enemy when he retreated.

The peculiarity of the breakthrough here was that it was carried out with the forcing of the river, which had a wide swampy floodplain.

To deliver a powerful blow to the front edge, front-line craftsmen designed "flying torpedoes": "A streamlined wooden barrel was attached to the M-13 rocket using iron hoops. Liquid tol was poured inside the barrel. The total weight of such a device reached 100-130 kilograms. For stability in flight, a wooden

stabilizer. Shooting was carried out from a wooden box with iron skids in

as guides. This box was previously placed in the pit and given it the desired elevation angle. If desired, it was possible to launch in series of five ten pieces. On June 9, we conducted experimental shooting. They fired 26 torpedoes in single order and in series. The range of their flight reached 1400 meters, and the explosions were of such force that funnels six meters in diameter and up to three meters deep were formed in the loamy soil. The front command considered it expedient to use at least 2000 of these devices in the process of artillery preparation. For comparison, the M-13 projectile without a "nozzle" created a funnel with a diameter of 2 meters and a depth of up to 1 meter.

Violent activity, the importance of which the modern young generation cannot understand, was developed by the "mehlis" and "hams": "Invaluable assistance in the period of preparation for the offensive, preparation for the hidden and therefore especially difficult, we were provided with special bulletins of the Main Political Directorate on the experience of party political work in battles near Stalingrad and on the Kursk salient. All of us not only got acquainted with the organization of political work in the troops, but also helped to hold meetings, rallies, talks, actively delved into the affairs of the army press ... In those

units of the 49th Army, which were primarily to break through the positional defense of the Nazi troops, appointed the most experienced political workers. We made sure that party and Komsomol organizations were created in all rifle companies ... Particular importance was attached to the selection and education of company party organizers.

On June 23, during artillery preparation, specially allocated reinforced companies crossed the Pronya River and captured the first three trenches. Following them, along the assault bridges induced by the sappers, the main forces of the divisions also crossed by the end of the artillery preparation. However, tanks and self-propelled guns encountered great difficulties in overcoming the swampy floodplain, which affected the slowdown in the rate of attack. By the end of June 23, the troops of General Grishin, striking at a front of 12 km, advanced 5-8 km. But they didn't have to rest. Judging by the memoirs of General Okorokov, hosts of political workers did not let the soldiers sleep at all either before the offensive or during it: "On the night of June 22, we received the text of the historical document of the Soviet government "Gree of the Year of the Patriotic War of the Soviet Union", and immediately the political workers began to organize meetings at which the content of this document was explained to the fighters. And at dawn on June 23, two or three hours before the start of the offensive, rallies were held in all units and subunits ... "After a whole day of fighting, it becomes even more interesting:" Political work in the advancing troops went on continuously, literally, during the day, and at night

In the divisions, highlighting themselves with pocket flashlights, political workers, party organizers of the companies, members of the party bureau issued lightning newspapers, wrote short leaflets - they were passed from hand to hand. And in the units and subunits of the second echelon, which were to join the battle in the morning, political workers held rallies, party and Komsomol meetings were held there.

The next day, the troops of the 49th Army fought another 12-14 km.

On the night of June 25, the Germans began to withdraw beyond the Dnieper. The formations of the 33rd Army, Major General A.P., went into pursuit. Penchevsky and the 50th Army, Lieutenant General I.V. Boldin. On June 26-27, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front reached the eastern bank of the Dnieper, crossed it, and by June 28 liberated the cities of Mogilev, Shklov and Bykhov. In the Mogilev area, the enemy's 12th infantry division, which was defending the "fortress", was destroyed. The remnants of the garrison, together with the division commander General Bamler and the commandant of the Mogilev fortified area, General

von Ermansdorff surrendered. In the battle, the commander of the 39th Army Corps, General of Artillery Martinek, and General Schinemann, who replaced him, were killed.

At this time, the attack aviation of the front dealt a powerful blow to the columns

German troops retreating to Minsk and pursued by units of the 49th Army. Soviet divisions rushed to the Berezina.

BOBRUISK OPERATION

1st Belorussian Front of Army General K.K. Rokossovsky included the 3rd, 28th, 47th, 48th, 61st, 65th, 69th, 70th field, 2nd tank, 6th and 16th air armies, 1st army of the Polish Army, as well as horse-mechanized a group consisting of the 1st mechanized and 4th guards Kuban cavalry corps and the Dnieper military flotilla. In total - 90 divisions, 4 fortified areas, 6 tank, 1 mechanized corps, 1 cavalry, 1 rifle, 3 tank, 2 self-propelled artillery brigades, 11 separate tank and 27 self-propelled artillery regiments - 1,153,300 people, 15,500 guns and mortars, 900 jet installations, about 1000 tanks.

The idea of the Bobruisk operation carried out by the right wing of the front, proposed by Rokossovsky, was to strike the enemy in converging directions from areas north of Rogachev and south of Parichi in the general direction of Bobruisk in order to encircle and destroy the Bobruisk grouping and further advance to Pukhovichi, Slutsk. Stalin and his deputies at the May meeting insisted on delivering one main blow from the bridgehead in the Rogachev area. The front commander, based on the insufficient operational density of the bridgehead and the conditions of the terrain, which did not allow large enough forces to operate, insisted on his own version - two strikes and "both are the main ones." The Supreme Commander twice suggested that Rokossovsky go into the next room and consider the Stavka's proposals, but in the end he approved the front's plan.

The northern strike group included the 3rd and 48th armies and the 9th tank corps, which had 251 tanks and self-propelled guns; southern - 65th and 48th armies, KMG and 1st guards tank corps - 526 combat vehicles. The Dnieper flotilla was supposed to support the offensive of the 65th Army of Lieutenant General P.I. Batov and transport the troops of the 48th Army, Lieutenant General P.L. Romanenko across the Berezina. About 10,000 guns and mortars and 850 launchers were concentrated on the right wing of the front, which made it possible to have 225 or more barrels per 1 km.

Air cover for the operation was provided by 2033 aircraft, including 932 fighters of the 16th Air Army of Colonel General S.I. Rudenko.

The enemy's 9th Army (10 infantry divisions) under the command of General Hans Jordan and two divisions of the 4th Army, which had 2600 guns and 110 assault guns, were defending in the Bobruisk direction.

The main difficulty of the forthcoming offensive was that the troops had to operate in a formidable wooded and heavily marshy area, which was crossed by the tributaries of the Pripyat River, especially in the Parichi direction. The troops learned hard to overcome swamps and rivers using improvised means, to navigate in the forest, built gati and mastered "wet shoes" - marsh skis made of vines. The German command least of all expected a strike in this area, so the German defense here was of a focal nature.

Rokossovsky and Zhukov arranged a kind of competition among themselves.

The front commander controlled the actions of the southern strike force, the representative of the Stavka - the northern one. "... Zhukov, who at one time ardently defended the idea of the main attack from the Dnieper bridgehead of the 3rd Army, went there. Leaving, Georgy Konstantinovich jokingly told me that he and Gorbатов would give us a hand across the Berezina and help pull the troops out of the swamps to Bobruisk. But it turned out, perhaps, the other way around," recalls Rokossovsky.

The breakthrough began on June 24th. The day before, reconnaissance in force was carried out, but since three other fronts were already on the offensive, the Germans brought their troops to full combat readiness, and the advanced battalions were met with heavy fire and numerous counterattacks and had no success.

On the night before the breakthrough, the 16th Air Army and long-range aviation launched heavy bombing strikes on the main defense line.

At 0455 artillery preparation began. Although the enemy was expecting it, the force of artillery fire and air strikes shook him to the ground, especially in the direction of operations of the southern strike force. Under the roar of "artillery music" sappers fastened the gati.

The troops of the 65th and 28th armies went on the attack at 7 o'clock in the morning with the support of a double fire shaft and attack aircraft. Following the infantry, close support tanks, artillery, and a self-propelled artillery regiment moved across the swamps along the log floors. By 1300, Batov's units had crossed all five lines of trenches and advanced up to 5-6 km. In order to build on the success and cut off the Germans' escape routes from Bobruisk, the commander brought into battle the 1st Guards Don Tank Corps, Major General M.F. Panov. Thanks to this, the 65th Army, as well as the 28th Army, Lieutenant General A.A. Luchinsky on the first day of the offensive advanced up to 10 km and increased the breakthrough to 30 km along the front, and the tank corps overcame 20 km with battles.

This "high cross-country ability" of the Russian soldier and his "extreme closeness to nature" evoked directly mystical feelings in the enemy: "There are simply no natural obstacles for him: in the impenetrable forest, swamps and swamps, in the roadless steppe - everywhere he feels at home. He crosses wide rivers with the most elementary means at hand, he can lay roads everywhere. In a few days, the Russians build many kilometers of gati through impenetrable swamps; in winter, columns of a hundred ranks of ten people each go to a forest with deep snow cover; in half an hour a new thousand come to replace these people, and in a few hours a well-trodden road appears on terrain that in our west would be considered impassable. An unlimited number of soldiers allows for the transfer of heavy guns and other military equipment over any terrain without any vehicles.

The formations of the northern strike group were able to penetrate the enemy defenses only 2-4 km. Troops of the 3rd Army, Lieutenant General A.V. Gorbатов met with stubborn resistance. Repulsing the enemy's continuous counterattacks, they captured only the first and second trenches and were forced to gain a foothold. The results of the attack were also affected by the difficulties associated with overcoming the swampy floodplain of the Drut River. "On the evening of June 24," Rokossovsky recalls, "Zhukov called me and, with his usual frankness, congratulated me on my success, saying that Gorbатов would have to give us a hand from the southern bank of the Berezina."

On the morning of June 25, General Gorbатов brought into battle two tank brigades of the 9th Tank Corps, Major General B.S. Bakharova. Having made a maneuver through a wooded swampy area, the tankers, supported by three aviation corps (!), completed the breakthrough of the main strip and reached the second one.

In the offensive zone of the 28th Army in the afternoon, a cavalry mechanized group under the command of General Pliev entered the gap, with which two aviation corps interacted. Thus, about 900 tanks and self-propelled guns came into play.

On June 26, Gorbатов, or rather, Zhukov, who was at the command post of the 3rd Army and personally instructed General Bakharov, threw forward the entire 9th Panzer Corps with the task of breaking into the rear of the enemy, capturing Staritsy and cutting the Mogilev-Bobruisk highway. (Zhukov, according to the observations of General Chistyakov,

was also "unforgiving": "By the way, I had to meet with G.K. Zhukov, and I seem to have studied some of the features of his character. We all knew that if Marshal Zhukov arrived in a good mood, he would still scold him for any omission that he noticed, and leave angry. And if he arrives in a bad state, he will open it, but he will leave in a good one. For all that, Marshal Zhukov has always shown us an example of forgiveness. The main thing is to put everyone in cancer and show who the boss is.)

By the end of the third day of the offensive, Batov's army reached the approaches to Bobruisk, and Luchinsky's army liberated Gusev. Pliev's group went to the Ptich River in the Glusk area and forced it in places. Panov's tank corps cut the roads leading from Bobruisk to the west. The troops of the 9th German Army were bypassed from the northwest and southwest. The enemy began to retreat, but it was too late.

On June 27, the 9th and 1st Guards Tank Corps closed the ring around the Bobruisk enemy grouping. 6 divisions of the 35th Army and 41st Tank Corps were surrounded - 40,000 soldiers and officers, a large amount of weapons and equipment. Part of the troops of the front received the task of liquidating the encircled grouping, while the main forces continued to develop the offensive against Osipovich and Slutsk. Following the mobile troops, the 3rd and 28th armies advanced to the outer front of the encirclement, and the 48th and 65th to the inner.

Hitler replaced General Jordan with Nikolaus von Vormann. The latter inherited an unenviable legacy: by this time the bulk of the 9th Army had been surrounded in Bobruisk and on the eastern bank of the Berezina.

True, the northwestern section of the internal front at that time was covered only by parts of two tank corps, since the rifle formations had not yet had time to approach. It was on this sector that the Germans began preparations for a breakthrough in order to connect with the troops of the 4th Army and create defenses along the Berezina and the approaches to Minsk. In the afternoon, the enemy made up to fifteen attacks in the Titovka area, trying to break through to the north: "... the most violent attack was played out in front of the front of the 444th and 407th regiments. The main forces of our artillery regiment were concentrated in this area. At least 2,000 enemy soldiers and officers, with the support of fairly strong gunfire, marched on our positions. The guns opened fire on the attackers from a distance of seven hundred meters, machine guns - from four hundred. The Nazis were coming. Shells exploded in their midst. Machine guns mowed down the ranks. The Nazis walked, stepping over the corpses of their soldiers. They went for a breakthrough, regardless of anything ... It was a crazy attack ... We saw a terrible picture from the NP, "recalled the commander of the 108th Infantry Division, General P.A. Teremov.

Air reconnaissance discovered that the enemy was concentrating armored vehicles, motor vehicles and artillery on the Zhlobin-Bobruisk road. In the current situation, representatives of the Stavka Zhukov and Novikov decided to frustrate the intentions of the Germans with the help of the massive use of all available aviation. At 19.15, the first groups of bombers and attack aircraft of the 16th Air Army, Colonel General S.I. Rudenko began to strike at the head of the enemy column, and the next - at the vehicles that had stopped on the road. Within an hour and a half, 526 aircraft

groups of 26-30 vehicles delivered continuous attacks on the encircled troops, inflicting enormous damage on them and finally demoralizing them. Having abandoned all the equipment, the Germans tried to break through to Bobruisk, but fell under the flank fire of the 105th rifle corps of the 65th army. By this time, the troops of Romanenko's 48th Army had approached, and with blows from several directions, by 13:00 on June 28, they had basically destroyed the encircled enemy grouping. The German 35th Army Corps ceased to exist, among those who surrendered was its commander, General von Lutzow, the commander of the 134th Infantry Division, General Philip committed suicide.

General Gorbатов, a passionate follower of Suvorov, who ate from

soldier's cauldron, the one about which Stalin said: "He will fix Gorbатов's grave", used the "landscapes" of the defeat around Bobruisk for educational purposes, arranging a "tour" for the troops of the second echelon: "... I drove along the railway bridge over the Berezina, adapted enemy for vehicles, and was struck by the picture he saw: the entire field adjacent to the bridge was littered with the corpses of the Nazis, there were at least three thousand of them ... I remembered the old expression: "The corpses of the enemy smell good," and I changed the route of two divisions of the echelon to pass over the railway bridge and look at the work of their comrades from the first echelon. The extra six kilometers covered will pay off in the future ... "

At the same time, there were battles for Bobruisk itself. There were more than 10,000 German soldiers in the city, and the remnants of the defeated units to the east were constantly leaking here. The commandant of Bobruisk, General Adolf Haman, managed to organize a strong all-round defense. The houses were adapted for firing points, the streets were barricaded, tanks were dug at the crossroads, the approaches to the city were carefully mined. Bloody battles for Bobruisk continued from 27 to 29 June. Only a small enemy group of about 5,000 men under the command of the commander of the 41st Panzer Corps, General Hofmeister, managed to break through in the direction of Osipovich, but it was soon destroyed, and the general replenished the collection of prisoners.

During the fighting in the Bobruisk direction, the enemy lost about 74,000 soldiers and officers killed and captured. The defeat of the Germans near Bobruisk created another large gap in their defense.

Significant assistance to the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front was provided by the Dnieper military flotilla under the command of Captain 1st Rank V.V. Grigoriev. Its ships, moving up the Berezina, supported the infantry and tanks of the 48th Army with fire. They transported 66,000 fighters, a lot of weapons and military equipment from the left bank of the river to the right. The flotilla violated the enemy's crossings and landed troops in his rear.

The offensive of the Soviet troops in Belarus from 23 to 28 June put the Army Group Center in front of a catastrophe. Its defense was broken through in all directions of the 500-kilometer front. The group suffered heavy losses. Soviet troops advanced 80-150 km west, liberated hundreds of settlements, surrounded and destroyed 13 German divisions, and thus were able to launch a swift offensive in the direction of Minsk, Baranovich.

For the skillful leadership of the troops during the defeat of the Vitebsk and Bobruisk enemy groups, on June 26, Chernyakhovsky was awarded the military rank of army general, and on June 29, army general Rokossovsky was awarded the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union. General Rotmistrov, on the contrary, earned a reprimand from the Supreme Commander for the indecisive actions of the tank army: "The Headquarters requires the 5th Guards. The tank army of swift and decisive actions that meet the situation at the front.

In the course of hostilities, the German command sought to improve the position of its troops in Belarus at the expense of meager reserves and maneuver forces from other sectors of the Eastern Front. But these measures turned out to be belated and insufficient and could not effectively influence the course of events.

By the end of June 28, the 1st Baltic Front was fighting on the outskirts of Polotsk and at the turn of Zaozerye, Lepel, and the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front approached the Berezina River. Fierce battles with enemy tanks continued in the Borisov area. The left wing of the front curved sharply to the east. It constituted the northern section of a kind of bag, in which the 4th Army and part of the forces of the 9th Army of the enemy found themselves, which escaped encirclement near Bobruisk. Troops pushed the Germans from the east

2nd Belorussian Front, which were located 160-170 km from Minsk. Formations of the 1st Belorussian Front reached the Svisloch-Osipovich line, finally breaking into the enemy defenses on the Berezina and enveloping it from the south. The advanced units of the front were located 85-90 km from the capital of Belarus. Exceptionally favorable conditions were created for encircling the main forces of Army Group Center east of Minsk.

The actions of the Soviet troops thwarted the attempts of the German command to withdraw their units in an organized manner beyond the Berezina. During the retreat, the 4th German Army was forced to use mainly one dirt road Mogilev - Berezino - Minsk. The enemy could not break away from the pursuit. Under continuous attacks on the ground and from the air, the German troops suffered heavy losses. Hitler was outraged. On June 28, he removed Field Marshal Bush as commander of Army Group Center, or, as Guderian noted, at that time commander of "empty space." Field Marshal Walter Model arrived in his place, who for some time simultaneously remained the commander of the Northern Ukraine Army Group.

MINSK AND POLOTSK

On June 28, the Headquarters of the Soviet Supreme High Command ordered the advancing troops to surround the enemy in the Minsk area with converging blows. The task of closing the ring was assigned to the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts. They had to rapidly advance on Molodechno and Baranovich in order to create a mobile external front. Part of the forces they had to create a solid internal front of the encirclement. Troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front simultaneously advanced in the direction of Minsk. They fettered, crushed and destroyed parts of the enemy, did not give them the opportunity to break away and quickly retreat to the west. Soviet aviation, firmly holding air supremacy, inflicted powerful blows on the enemy, disorganized the planned withdrawal of his troops and the regrouping of reserves. At the same time, the troops of the 1st Baltic, the right wing of the 3rd Belorussian and part of the forces of the 1st Belorussian Fronts were to continue to move west, destroy suitable enemy reserves and, not allowing the enemy to re-create a solid front in Belarus, create conditions for the development of an offensive on Siauliai, Kaunas and Warsaw directions.

The fronts without a pause began to carry out their tasks. During June 29-30, Chernyakhovsky's troops reached the Berezina River, crossed it in several places and began a rapid movement towards Minsk. | In July Rotmistrov's tank army liberated Borisov.

Having failed to detain the Soviet units on the Berezina, Model tried to organize a defense east of the Belarusian capital on the Dolginovo-Logoisk line.

Smolevichi - Cherven, however, it was not possible to do this. Bypassing the enemy's strongholds in forests and swamps with the help of guides from partisans, the troops of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian Fronts approached Minsk closer and closer. Tankers of the 5th Guards Army reached the source of the Svisloch, blocking the way to the north. Troops of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies broke into Smolevichi from the east. Troops of the 1st Belorussian Front were successfully advancing from the south.

Minsk was defended by the remnants of three infantry and the 5th tank division of von Saucken, as well as police units.

On July 2, units of the 2nd Guards Tank Corps made an almost 60-kilometer throw through the partisan area near Smolevichi and attacked the Germans near Minsk. In the night battle, the enemy was defeated, and the tankers in the morning 3

July broke into the city. Parts of Rotmistrov entered the northern outskirts of Minsk, followed by the forward detachments of the armies of Galitsky and Glagolev. At 1 pm, the 1st Guards Tank Corps entered the city from the south; after him, formations of the 3rd Army of the 1st Belorussian Front arrived in time from the southeast. By the end of the day, the capital of Belarus was liberated.

While fighting was going on in the Minsk area, the troops of Oslikovsky's cavalry-mechanized group on the right wing of the 3rd Belorussian Front advanced 120 km. The 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, having crossed the Viliya River, together with the partisans captured Vileyka and cut off the enemy's retreat to the northwest. On the left wing 1-

On the Belorussian Front, Pliev's group cut the Minsk-Baranovichi railway, captured Stolbtsy and Gorodeya.

As a result of the parallel pursuit by the mobile troops of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian Fronts and the frontal pursuit by the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front in the area east of Minsk, by July 4, units of the 12th, 27th, 35th Army, 39th and the 41st German tank corps with a total strength of about 100

thousands of people.

The liquidation of the German group east of Minsk was carried out in the period from 5 to 11 July. The troops of the 33rd Army of the 3rd Belorussian and part of the forces of the 50th and 49th armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front were involved in this task.

The enemy divisions caught in the ring were combined into two groups. One led by the commander of the 12th Army Corps and the acting commander of the 4th Army, General Muller, concentrated east of the Volma. The other, led by the commander of the 78th Assault Division, General Hans Traut, is southeast of Volma. The Germans tried to break through to the west and reach the Baranovichi region, but during the heavy fighting that lasted from July 5 to 11, they were captured or destroyed. The enemy lost over 70,000 killed and about 35,000 captured. Among the prisoners were 12 generals, three corps commanders and nine division commanders. The 4th German Army actually ceased to exist. Of its eleven divisions, only the 286th security division survived.

The troops of the 1st Baltic Front, having completed the Vitebsk-Orsha operation, in accordance with the task set by the Headquarters, from June 29, carried out the Polotsk operation. They were opposed by the formations of the 16th Army of the Army Group "North" and part of the forces of the 3rd Panzer Army of the Army Group "Center". In an effort to keep Polotsk, the German command turned it into a powerful defense center and concentrated a strong group of troops on the outskirts of the city, which included six infantry divisions.

The concept of the operation provided for strikes in converging directions with

northeast and south to surround and destroy the Polotsk enemy grouping. The main role in the operation was assigned to the 4th shock army of Lieutenant General P.F. Malyshev, who delivered the main blow with her left flank in order to bypass Polotsk from the northwest. Bypassing Polotsk from the south-west was carried out by the right-flank formations of the 6th Guards Army, and its main forces, together with the 43rd Army, advanced in the direction of Glubokoe, Sventsyany. During the preparation of the operation, a covert regrouping of troops was carried out and superiority in forces was created in the sectors chosen for strikes.

On June 29, the 4th shock and 6th guards went on the offensive against Polotsk and, overcoming enemy resistance, began to cover the flanks of his Polotsk grouping. By the evening of July 1, they reached the eastern and southern outskirts of the city. The main forces of Chistyakov and Beloborodov that day reached the line of Germanovich, Gvozdovo, Dokshitsy, and tank formations broke through to the Desna River. After fierce three-day street fighting, by the morning of July 4, Polotsk was completely liberated from the enemy. The troops of the left wing of the front, pursuing the retreating

German formations, by the end of July 4, moved west about 110 km and reached the border of Lithuania.

Having mastered the Polotsk node of the enemy's defense, the Soviet troops were able to conduct an offensive along both banks of the Western Dvina in the general direction of Daugavpils (Dvinsk). The successful advance of the 1st Baltic Front in the Polotsk and Sventsyansk directions reliably ensured the offensive of the main strategic grouping of Soviet troops in Belarus from the north.

On July 3, Hitler removed General Lindemann from command of Army Group North. He was replaced by General Frisner, who had previously successfully led the operations of the Narva Task Force.

This ended the first stage of Operation Bagration.

In 12 days, Soviet troops advanced 225-280 km at an average daily pace of 20-25 km, and liberated most of Belarus. The German Army Group Center suffered a catastrophic defeat: its main forces were surrounded and defeated. 51,930 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. With the entry of the Soviet Army to the line of Polotsk, Lake Naroch, Molodechno, Nesvizh, a huge gap 400 km long was formed in the enemy's front. To cover it, the Model had about 8 divisions at its disposal. There was an opportunity to start a relentless pursuit to drive the remnants of the defeated German troops to the western border of the USSR.

Stabilization of the situation on the Eastern Front became the most important task of the German command. The available forces of Army Group Center could cover only the main directions. The Hitler Headquarters had to urgently transfer additional troops from the Baltic States, Germany, Norway, Poland and Hungary to the aid of the Model. In the meantime, the field marshal had to get out. Assessing the actions of the Model, Marshal Zhukov admitted: "... I must say that the command of Army Group Center in this extremely difficult situation found the right way to act. Due to the fact that they did not have a continuous front and it was impossible to create one in the absence of the necessary forces, the German command decided to delay the offensive of our troops, mainly by short counterattacks. Under the cover of these strikes on the rear lines, the troops being transferred from Germany and from other sectors of the Soviet-German front were deployed in defense.

"Why did the Russians sweep so many brave, experienced, tenacious divisions from the battlefield and plunged Army Group Center into absolute disaster in forty-eight hours?"

To ask these questions is to look for the factors behind the Soviet victory. Maybe their huge numerical superiority? However, the German front in the East often successfully resisted a numerically superior enemy. Maybe the power of Soviet artillery? But this is nothing new, and of course, the cause of the disaster is not here, the German divisions more than once encountered such a density of artillery fire. The decisive factor was completely different - not in the stunning numerical superiority and magnificent weapons of the Red Army, but above all in the appearance of superior red air forces, they decisively changed the balance of power. Soviet air superiority was the most unpleasant surprise for the German troops in the East. Years of German control of the skies over the battlefields in Russia came to an abrupt end. Allied air forces cleared the Russian skies. None other than the Western allies! After the first forty-eight hours of the invasion of France, it became clear that the outcome of events in the West depended on whether

the end of this Eisenhower air supremacy. This dominance paralyzed all the counterattacks of the German tank forces: the planes defeated the motorized divisions when they were just heading for the coast; it shook the "Atlantic Wall" and from above led the Nazi European fortress out of the battle. Hermann Goering did not foresee such a turn of events. Therefore, in the first days of June 1944, Hitler had no choice but to completely deprive his Eastern Front of all Luftwaffe squadrons and transfer them to the West ... The defeat in the air was absolute. In the west, there were not enough German squadrons to challenge Eisenhower's air supremacy, and in the east, German troops found themselves at the decisive moment homeless, without the help that is a vital necessity in modern warfare. Thus, the enemy gained control in the sky, which was the decisive factor in the catastrophic defeat of Army Group Center.

Indeed, the German 6th Air Fleet could oppose the power of five Soviet air armies with only 40 serviceable fighters.

In addition to overwhelming numerical superiority, Soviet aviation rose to a qualitatively new level in matters of control organization thanks to the widespread introduction of radio communications. During the Belarusian operation, aviation generals Khryukin, Vershinin, Skripko did absolutely incredible things: they retargeted armadas of near and far bombers right in the air. The Germans, however, mastered this science even before the war, because without organizing the interaction of the branches of the armed forces, quick decision-making and instantly bringing them to the executors, "blitzkrieg" was impossible in principle. It took the Red Army a year to comprehend this and two more to create and master it.

How this process took place on the example of the 1st Air Army was described in detail by General E.V. Coyander. In the first year of the war, the squadrons that went on a mission, leaving the airfield, were not controlled by anyone, fighters were not guided from the ground, attack aircraft did not interact with ground troops, since there were no radio stations on Soviet aircraft. In some air divisions, there were no walkie-talkies at all either in the air or on the ground. In the summer of 1942, one radio-equipped fighter regiment appeared in the army. Moreover, only a third of the machines in it had transceiver radio stations and half had only receivers. This was considered a great achievement. At the same time, the first attempt was made to direct fighters from a ground point. The experiment failed due to the inability of the pilots to use communications.

In the summer of 1943, the 2nd Fighter Air Corps of General

A.S. Blagoveshchensky. All aircraft of his divisions were fully equipped with transceiver radio stations: "When the chief of staff of the corps, Lieutenant Colonel D.S. Kompanets reported this, we did not believe him at first.

The communication situation changed radically only by the summer of 1944. This is how the organization of communications in the 1st Air Army now looked like: "... all bomber, attack and fighter aircraft are equipped with airborne transceivers. They are not only on Po-2 night bombers. The Army Communications Regiment was additionally allocated 10 powerful radio stations located on Studebakers. Six of them were equipped with RST-1 installations with ST-35 devices that perform direct printing by radio. Guidance radio stations are installed on 10 "jeeps". Each radio station has a remote device that allows you to control the receiver and transmitter at a distance of up to 75 meters. They can also work on the move... The possibilities of wire means have immeasurably increased... There are wires and fittings for 750 wire-kilometers... There were three powerful radio stations at the army command post. One worked in the aviation call network on the battlefield and was the commander's personal radio station. The other two were intended for separate control of bombers and attack aircraft. Fighter control was provided for on the waves of those formations that they

covered. At the headquarters of the army and the headquarters of air formations, there was plenty of radio equipment ... "

And the result achieved: "The offensive in the Belarusian operation, as you know, developed rapidly. Under these conditions, the greatest load in the management of aviation fell on the radio. The aviation officers, who were in the ground armies and mobile troops, kept in continuous contact with the leading groups of bombers and attack aircraft. In a rapidly changing situation, it often turned out that the planes approached the target, say, to a settlement, and it was already liberated by infantrymen or tankers. Any delay in retargeting could lead to a blow to their troops. But now times are very different. The gunners communicated with attack aircraft and fighters no longer by performing slides or swinging their wings, but by a living human voice. Ground-to-air radio communications ensured the reliability and high efficiency of aviation control on the battlefield ... Radio communications in the Belarusian operation became the main and trouble-free nerve for controlling aviation combat operations.

Allied deliveries played a major role in saturating the Red Army with modern means of communication. For this, our memoirist traditionally spat in their direction: "Their arrival in the army coincided with the arrival of American-made communications equipment, including a large batch of terrestrial shortwave and ultrashortwave radio stations.

The SCR-399 radio stations turned out to be the most suitable for controlling aviation formations, and the SCR-284 for working at airfields. They were simple and reliable, and the car bodies in which the equipment was mounted were easily rearranged to cars of different brands. But here is the technical description of the stations, the rules for their operation - everything was in English.

With someone's light hand, the development of American radios began to be called, of course with a frank mockery, the "second front" ...

The arrival of radio facilities from across the ocean caused a lot of trouble for their development and implementation, although they are not of decisive importance in providing aviation with radio communications. had".

The general describes the "simple and reliable" American radios installed on American "Studebakers" and "jeeps", has plenty of

American "wire-kilometers", but "it did not matter." Three trucks were required to transport the Soviet-made RAT airfield station.

Meanwhile, 35,800 radio stations, 5,899 receivers, 245,000 telephone sets and 348 locators were delivered to the USSR, which provided the basic needs of the Red Army - 1.7 million kilometers of field telephone cable and 387.6 thousand tons of copper, which accounted for 82.5% Soviet production for the war.

Similar processes took place in all military branches. Retired Major A.T. Kholin recalls how in the summer of 1941 he received a walkie-talkie, a communications department and the first combat mission: to organize a communication point with the headquarters of the South-Western Front in Nizhyn: "... I decided to open the radio transmitter packed in a tarpaulin in order to look at it myself and ask the radio operators something : do they know the technique well, are they able to identify faults and fix them? They opened it and gasped ... It was a handicraft transmitter made by specialists from the Kyiv Radio Center. And no, of course, technical description. The consequences of hasty dismantling were noticeable: some parts hung on almost frayed wires, soldering was broken in several places. In order not to obstruct the reader's attention with radio terminology, I will say that it seems that the transmitter worked on only one wave, and it was impossible to determine which one it was tuned to now. We could not determine how we could tune to the waves we needed with the help of removable probes on self-induction coils.

The situation was not the best with the radio receiver, where replaceable self-induction coils were used for coarse tuning, and more precise tuning was carried out by two capacitors of variable capacitance on scales divided by one hundred degrees.

The same author describes the radio center of the 1st Belorussian Front three years later: "Soon we began to receive American equipment. These were mainly radio stations of the type SCR-299 and SCR-399. In terms of power, they were somewhat inferior to our RAF, but they were more mobile, since they were mounted in metal booths of Chevrolet and Studebaker vehicles, which were distinguished by increased off-road maneuverability due to the front drive wheels ... The radio unit was equipped with three powerful PAT radio stations, twenty-four radio stations of the RAF type and SCR-399, two sets of hardware radio-Bodo for working with army headquarters by direct printing on the radio. All this was completely mounted on cars. The radio communication center was prepared for simultaneous operation on 32 radio channels"

But even in 1944, according to General Pokrovsky: "In terms of quality, communication by that time was already lagging behind the requirements of command and control in an operation on a large scale and at a high pace." In terms of saturation of troops with communications equipment, we never reached the level of the Wehrmacht.

After the completion of the first stage of the operation, the Headquarters gave the fronts new directives, according to which they were to liquidate the encircled enemy grouping east of Minsk and continue a decisive offensive to the west. The 1st Baltic Front was to develop an offensive in the Kaunas direction. For the convenience of control, Bagramyan transferred the 4th shock army to the 2nd Baltic Front, and in return received three combined arms armies and a mechanized corps. The 3rd Belorussian Front was ordered to strike in the direction of Molodechno, Vilnius. The troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front were tasked with advancing with the main forces on Volkovysk and subsequently reaching Bialystok. The 1st Belorussian received an order to strengthen the offensive with the right wing in the direction of Baranovichi, Brest. On July 2, the action plan of his left

wing, which now had to join the offensive and advance to Brest and Lublin. If at the first stage of the Bagration operation, solving the tasks of breaking through the strategic front of the enemy and encircling his groupings, the fronts delivered concentric strikes, now it was necessary to organize an early pursuit and an even greater expansion of the breakthrough. The headquarters demanded strikes in divergent directions, unfolding, according to Vasilevsky's definition, a "strategic fan".

At this stage, the directorates of two armies, a tank corps and 24 rifle divisions were additionally brought into action. It was also decided to involve the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts in the north, and the 1st Ukrainian fronts in the south. This made it possible to tie down the enemy's forces on a broad front, in several directions, to thwart his attempts to concentrate forces to counter the offensive in Belarus.

THE OFFENSIVE CONTINUES

In the situation that developed after the major defeats of the Army Group "Center", the German command decided to restrain the offensive of the Soviet troops, mainly with short counterattacks, in order to deploy troops under their cover,

transferred from other sectors and from Germany in order to restore a continuous front of defense. The enemy offered especially stubborn resistance south of Daugavpils. He guessed the desire of the Soviet command to reach the Gulf of Riga by the shortest route and presented a possible prospect for the development of events in the zone of the 1st Baltic Front. Therefore, the surviving units of the 3rd Panzer Army were hastily withdrawn to pre-prepared positions between lakes and swamps in order to defend themselves in cooperation with the troops of the 16th Army of the "North" group, entrenched in the Daugavpils area. The Germans hoped that they would be able to use the difficult terrain to detain the Soviet troops even with small forces.

The purpose of the operation carried out by Bagramyan is to defeat the enemy grouping in the Siauliai area, and then go to the Gulf of Riga and cut off the escape routes of the German Army Group North to East Prussia. After the left wing reached the line of Lake Drysvyaty, Boginskoye, Narocho, the troops of the 1st Baltic Front were supposed to be the forces of the 6th Guards, 43rd, 39th (the latter was transferred from the 3rd Belorussian Front), who arrived from the Crimea 2- th Guards and 51st armies to develop an offensive in the general direction of Sventsiany, Kaunas, Siauliai. In developing this plan, the General Staff proceeded from the assumption that, under the threat of being cut off from Germany, the troops of Army Group North would hasten to leave the Baltic states for East Prussia. Marshal Vasilevsky explained to Bagramyan: "In a situation where the front is rapidly rolling towards Germany itself, to isolate and threaten to destroy the huge forces in the Baltics is the greatest stupidity. Therefore, it is to be expected that Hitler will hasten to withdraw Army Group North to East Prussia in order to use it in the battles for Germany proper. If the main forces of the 1st Baltic Front attacked in the Riga direction, the marshal believed, then they would be detained by the retreating enemy troops, and they would not be able to block their path to East Prussia. This means that the main blow is to Kaunas, to the northeastern borders of Prussia. Subsequent events showed that Hitler, for reasons of a political nature, had a different opinion on this matter, although - the military think the same way - the German generals actually proposed to withdraw Army Group North to the line of the Western Dvina, Riga.

"The main motives that pushed Hitler to this," according to General Butlar, "were probably the desire to influence Finland and the desire to continue the import of iron and nickel from Scandinavia." No matter how the generals scolded the Führer

Wehrmacht for military miscalculations, but they did not have to think about where to get iron for tanks and guns, nickel and manganese for the production of armor, rubber for cars, oil for engines. But it was in the summer of 1944 that the German military industry, despite the lack of workers, strategic bombing, lack of raw materials, reached the peak of its productivity.

On July 5, Baghramyan's troops launched the Šiauliai operation without an operational pause. Initially, the offensive was carried out by the two armies remaining in the front - the 6th Guards and the 43rd. Chistyakov's army advanced on Daugavpils from the south, on the outskirts of which bloody battles broke out. The terrain for the advance of the troops was extremely difficult. The Germans transferred five fresh divisions here and concentrated large aviation forces. In addition, Bagramyan had to allocate part of his forces to cover his right wing from Army Group North, and the 1st Tank Corps, in which no more than a dozen combat vehicles remained in service, was brought to the rear for resupply. As General Chistyakov recalls: "In no other operation of the Great Patriotic War did I have to report to the front commander about the plight of the army as often as in Daugavpils. At times, our situation was literally critical ... "

On July 10, the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front, General Eremenko, went on the offensive. Two days later, the 4th Shock Army captured Drissa, making the fight easier.

behind

Daugavpils. The enemy concentrated there was no longer thinking about how to strike from the north on the flank of the 1st Baltic Front, but about defending the city. But Chistyakov's troops, stretched out in four corps on a 160-kilometer front, could not take Daugavpils either.

In the center and on the left wing, the offensive of the 43rd and 39th armies transferred to the front in the Kaunas direction was more successful. By mid-July, the troops here advanced westward up to 140 km, cut the Daugavpils-Vilnius railway, the Daugavpils-Kaunas highway and thwarted the enemy's attempt to firmly secure the junction of the 16th and 3rd tank armies. However, by this time it became clear that there were no signs of a German withdrawal from the Baltic states, on the contrary, the German command was energetically preparing countermeasures.

On July 12, Vasilevsky appealed to the Headquarters with a request to release the 1st Baltic Front from delivering the main blow with the left wing to Kaunas and to allow it to concentrate efforts on the right wing, against Daugavpils, aiming the already approaching 51st and 2nd Guards armies at the center, at Panevezys and Šiauliai. Now the Chief of the General Staff believed that by further developing this attack on Riga, it would be possible to quickly split the German defenses here, reach the Baltic coast and cut off Army Group North from Germany. The army of General Lyudnikov in this situation again returned to the 3rd Belorussian Front, which had to solve the problem of capturing Kaunas. Stalin agreed with Vasilevsky's proposals, but did not give the tank army requested for Bagramyan. He allowed only the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps of General Obukhov to be transferred after completion. The strike with the introduction of new forces was scheduled for July 20.

The troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front were given the task by the directive of the Headquarters of July 4: to advance with the main forces in the general direction to Vilnius, Kaunas and, no later than July 10-12, liberate Vilnius and Lida, then go to the Neman and seize a bridgehead on its western bank. On the right, the 1st Baltic Front struck in the Šiauliai direction; on the left, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian were advancing on Grodno.

Troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front began to carry out the Vilnius

operations without an operational pause, having all the armies in the first echelon. The offensive developed rapidly. The enemy did not have a continuous front of defense and countered only by individual formations that approached and the remnants of broken units. The German command tried to stop the advance of the Soviet troops at the previously prepared line of Daugavpils, Vilnius, Lida, on which they concentrated the retreating and newly arriving units and formations. Strong positions were established in the Vilnius region.

The command of the Army Group "Center" prepared the city for defense in advance and pulled the retreating units of the 3rd Panzer Army of General Reinhardt to it. The garrison of the city consisted of 12-15 thousand soldiers and officers. In addition, during the hostilities, this grouping was reinforced by newly arrived formations.

To preempt the enemy, Chernyakhovsky turned the 5th Guards Tank Army at dawn on July 4 to the capital of Lithuania. On July 5, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front captured the important transport hub of Molodechno. On July 7, Rotmistrov's tankers reached Vilnius and pinned down the German group from the front. On July 8, Krylov's 5th Army launched an attack on the city from the northeast, reinforced by the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps of Lieutenant General V.T. Obukhov. They bypassed Vilnius from the north, made their way to the Viliya River and cut the railway to Kaunas. The 11th Guards Army bypassed the city from the south and connected with Krylov's divisions. On July 9, the city was completely blocked by Soviet units. The armies of Chernyakhovsky immediately rushed to Kaunas and Suwalki. Meanwhile, the 31st Army

General Glagolev took Lida.

At the same time, battles began to destroy the encircled German troops. The enemy, trying to unblock the encircled grouping, concentrated up to 150 tanks and assault guns, a regiment of motorized infantry and launched several counterattacks from the areas of Maisjogala and west of Vevis. The garrison of Vilnius also tried to break out of the encirclement, reinforced by a parachute landing of 600 people, landed on July 10, 6 km west of the city.

However, all these attempts were unsuccessful. Two "fifth" armies - Krylov and Rotmistrov - stopped all enemy attempts to save the Vilnius garrison under the command of General Stigel from capitulation.

The 1st Air Army played a major role in the operation. Aviation operations were especially active from 7 to 13 July. Immediately before the assault on the city, 163 Pe-2 and 51 Il-2 aircraft launched a bombing attack on the enemy's main resistance centers, which contributed to the capture of Vilnius. In the following days, the main efforts of the 1st Air Army were focused on supporting troops in crossing the Neman River. During tense six-day battles, Soviet troops destroyed the encircled grouping and captured Vilnius on July 13.

During the battles for Vilnius, the troops of Galitsky and Glagolev, continuing to advance to the west, reached the Neman River and captured several bridgeheads on its left bank. The total forcing front in the Alytus region and to the south of it was 70 km, the depth of the captured bridgeheads reached 7-10 km. In an effort to prevent the expansion of bridgeheads, the German command pulled up large reserves in this area. The cavalry corps of General Oslikovsky started fighting for Grodno. Here the Soviet troops also ran into enemy reserves. It was not possible to break their resistance on the move, and Grodno was liberated only on July 16.

By July 20, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front advanced to a depth of up to 210 km at an average rate of 13-16 km per day. As a result of the Vilnius operation, favorable conditions were created for the front troops to reach the borders of the Eastern

Prussia. Until the end of July, Chernyakhovsky's armies fought to strengthen bridgeheads on the western bank of the Neman.

The troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, pursuing the enemy defeated near Minsk, were supposed to strike in the direction of Novogrudok, Volkovysk, Bialystok without any operational pause, to capture the Novogrudok region no later than July 12-15 and reach the Neman and Molochad rivers; further capture Volkovysk and advance on Bialystok. The Stavka transferred Gorbatov's 3rd Army to the front, and the 33rd Army became subordinate to Chernyakhovsky.

At the first stage of the Bialystok operation, in ten days, the armies of General Zakharov, destroying the rearguards of the enemy formations defeated near Minsk and crushing his suitable reserves, advanced 230 km with battles and, having forced the rivers Berezina, Svisloch, Schara and Neman, reached the line of Grodno, west of Volkovysk .

The Soviet command sought to withdraw its troops to the Bialystok-Brest line before the enemy was able to close the gap in the defense. The troops of Marshal Rokossovsky, separated by the Pripjat swamps, improved their operational position with access to Brest, and the length of the front line was halved. However, in order to reach Bialystok and Brest, it was necessary to take possession of Baranovichi - a major communications hub, which the Germans tried to keep at all costs.

In the direction of Baranovichi, the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front developed the offensive. Making extensive use of the mobility of tanks and motorized

infantry, the combat capabilities of aviation, the Soviet troops delivered strikes bypassing the enemy's defense centers, intercepting his retreat routes. As a result of concerted actions, on July 8 they liberated Baranovichi, on July 10 - Slonim and Luninets, on July 14 - Pinsk, and by July 16 they reached the line of Svisloch, Pruzhany.

By mid-July, the main forces of Army Group Center were defeated. Almost completely destroyed 25 divisions. Particularly heavy losses were suffered by the 4th field and 3rd tank armies. One division survived from the first, three from the second.

On July 17, 1944, Stalin showed the Germans Moscow, and demonstrated the successes of the Red Army to the whole world. The special event was called the "Great Waltz".

57,600 prisoners, captured mainly in Belarus, passed through the central streets of the capital under escort. Generals and officers moved ahead of the giant column. Sprinklers followed behind, symbolically disinfecting the city from the traces of the "conquerors of living space".

On July 18, in the zone of the 1st Baltic Front, formations of the 43rd Army reached the Sventoji River and crossed it on the move. A significant gap appeared in the enemy defense in the Šiauliai direction. This weak spot was exploited by the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies, which were brought into battle on 20 July. Their offensive from the south was provided by the 39th Army, again transferred to the 3rd Belorussian Front and advancing on Kaunas. The entry into the business of eighteen fresh divisions at once could not but give a result, the organized resistance of the enemy was broken in the very first hours. Both armies went into pursuit.

On July 22, the formations of the 51st Army, Lieutenant General Ya.G. The cruiser has been taken over

Panevezys is a major communications hub. Troops of the 2nd Guards Army under the command of Lieutenant General P.G. Chanchibadze liberated the city of Raguva. Parts of Beloborodov cut the Panevezys-Daugavpils railway. Only in the 6th Guards Army did the offensive stall. But a day later, in connection with the advance of the 2nd Baltic Front, which bypassed Daugavpils from the north, the Germans began to retreat towards Riga. By the evening of July 24, formations of the 4th shock army broke into the western outskirts of Daugavpils.

Hitler again decided to change command of Army Group North. Frisner was replaced by General Scherner: "He was famous for his amazing courage, firmness and determination, great tactical skill and faith in iron discipline. He was absolutely fearless."

In order to break the growing resistance of the enemy in the Siauliai direction, on July 26 Bagramyan brought the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps into battle from the line west of Panevezys. Having advanced more than 70 km in a day, its units reached the outskirts of Šiauliai. On July 27, Kreizer's divisions and Obukhov's brigade, bypassing Siauliai from the northwest and southwest, captured the city. At the same time, another important node of resistance fell - Daugavpils.

On the same day, the Headquarters ordered the 1st Baltic Front to turn its main forces to Riga, and to attack with its left wing in the Klaipeda (Memel) direction, creating an outer front to encircle Army Group North. Obukhov's corps immediately launched an offensive along the Siauliai-Jelgava highway. With a swift night throw, the brigades covered 80 km and on July 28 reached Jelgava. The tankers tried to take the city on the move, but suffered heavy losses, trying to overcome the well-organized defense, and were instructed to wait for the approach of rifle units, and part of the forces to break through to the Gulf of Riga. On July 30, the 8th Guards Mechanized Brigade, Colonel S.D. Kremera took possession of the move

the city of Tukums, and the next day reached the forward detachments of the Gulf of Riga. Army Group North was cut off from East Prussia.

Kreizer's army and Obukhov's tankers occupied Yelgava on July 31. The forward detachments of the 43rd Army reached the southern bank of the Memele River and started fighting for the crossings. The 6th Guards moved slowly towards Riga along the left bank of the Daugava. By the end of July, the troops of the right wing of the front reached the line south of Livany, the Memele River, and the left wing - to the line of Kursenai, Kedainiai.

As a result of the Šiauliai operation, the troops of the 1st Baltic Front advanced from 100 to 400 km, defeated the enemy grouping in the Šiauliai direction and liberated a significant part of the territory of Latvia and Lithuania. Having cut off the withdrawal route to East Prussia for Army Group North, the troops of the front forced the enemy to transfer large forces to restore their communications and thus made a significant contribution to the successful completion of the Byelorussian operation.

On the 2nd Belorussian Front on July 17, the 50th, 3rd and 49th Army of Lieutenant General I.T. Grishin, as well as the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps, transferred from the 3rd Belorussian Front, broke the enemy's resistance at the Grodno-Svisloch line, repelled his counterattacks and, developing the offensive, captured Bialystok on July 27 after two days of fighting. By the end of July, Zakharov's armies reached the line of the Augustow Canal, the Narev River.

As a result of the Bialystok operation, Zakharov's army reached the line east of Augustow, Bialystok, the Narew River by the end of July and began to liberate

northeastern regions of Poland, and also reached the approaches to the border of East Prussia. The actions of the 2nd Belorussian Front near Bialystok overturned the enemy's plans to strike at the right wing of the troops of the Rokossovsky Front and facilitated their offensive at the end of July.

OFFENSIVE EXHAUSTED

The troops of the right wing and the center of the 1st Belorussian Front advanced 400-450 km to the west and by the end of July 17 reached the line west of Svisloch, Vidomla, Drogichin, bypassed the marshy areas of Polesye from the north and created the prerequisites for coordinated actions of all front forces in the future. the development of the offensive in Belarus and the liberation of the eastern regions of Poland.

Taking into account the developing situation, the front command prepared in advance the transition to the offensive of the troops of the left wing in the Kovel-Lublin direction. They included the 70th, 47th, 8th guards and 69th combined arms, 2nd tank, 6th air armies, 2nd and 7th guards cavalry, 11th tank corps,

and also the 1st Army of the Polish Army - 36 rifle and 6 cavalry divisions, 4 tank corps, 3 separate tank and self-propelled artillery brigade, 26 tank and self-propelled regiments, numbering 416,000 people, more than 7600 guns and mortars, 1750 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, 1465 combat aircraft.

The idea of the Lublin-Brest operation was to defeat the enemy's Lublin and Brest groupings of the enemy with strikes bypassing the Brest fortified region from the north and south and, developing the offensive in the Warsaw direction, reach the Vistula on a wide front. The main blow was delivered from the Kovel area in the general direction to Lublin, Warsaw, and part of the forces bypassing Brest from the south. The armies of the right wing, with the support of the 16th Air Army, advanced in the direction of Warsaw, bypassing the enemy's Brest grouping from the north.

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front were opposed here by the main forces of the 2nd Field and part of the forces of the 4th Tank Army of the Northern Ukraine Group.

In preparation for the attack on July 6, the troops of the left wing part of the forces occupied the city of Kovel, abandoned by the Germans "without any pressure from our side", and on the morning of July 18, the grouping of Soviet troops concentrated in this area went on the offensive with the main forces.

The formations of the strike force of the left wing of the front, with powerful artillery support and active assistance from aviation, broke through the enemy defenses on the first day. The 47th Army, commanded by the former Commissar of the General Staff, Lieutenant General N.I. Gusev - this was the fourteenth army commander, there will also be the fifteenth - began to rapidly advance on Siedlce, and the 8th Guards General Chuikov and the 69th Army of Lieutenant General V.Ya. Kolpakchi, supported by the 11th Panzer Corps, numbering 233 tanks, - to Lublin. On July 20, having advanced 70 km, they reached the Western Bug River on a wide front, crossed it on the move and entered Poland. The enemy hastily retreated to the west. The success of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front was facilitated by the offensive of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which began on July 13, which carried out the Lvov-Sandomierz operation, whose troops, part of the forces of the right wing, in the interests of interaction, struck at Zamosc. On July 22, Kolpakchi's troops liberated Helm, and the 11th Panzer Corps, Major General I.I. Yushchuk broke into Parchev.

After breaking through the enemy defenses on the Western Bug on July 21, the battle was

introduced the 2nd Panzer Army Lieutenant General S.I. Bogdanov - a huge force of 805 tanks and self-propelled guns, and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps, Lieutenant General V.V. Kryukov. The German command understood that the turn of the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front to reach the rear and flank of the grouping defending north of Polesie could occur at the line of Brest. Therefore, it pulled large reserves into this area, along with significant forces of the 2nd Army. By holding Brest, the enemy sought to disunite the efforts of the front and block the path to Warsaw for the Soviet troops.

The 65th Army of General Batov, which was ahead of its neighbors, got into a difficult situation. Moving through the area of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, on July 24, its troops were suddenly attacked by the 4th Panzer and 5th SS Viking Panzer Divisions.

"Our right neighbor, the 2nd Belorussian Front, lagged somewhat behind," recalls Marshal Rokossovsky, "and the 65th Army, without encountering much resistance from the enemy, quickly overcame the forests of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, pulled ahead and then got into an unpleasant story, being attacked from two sides by parts of two German tank divisions. They crashed into the center of the army, separated its troops into several groups, depriving the army commander for some time of communication with most of the formations. There was such a moment when our units mixed up with the German ones and it was difficult to make out where ours was, where the enemy was; the battle took on a focal character ... Units and subunits of the 65th Army showed great restraint in such a difficult situation. They quickly took up all-round defense, repulsed enemy attacks, tried to break through to each other. P.I. Batov and his staff took the necessary measures. The front command sent a rifle corps and a tank brigade to the rescue. The situation was restored, and the enemy, having suffered heavy losses, with difficulty carried off his feet. But Pavel Ivanovich had to endure difficult moments. Batov's troops reached the Western Bug and crossed it on the move.

Formations of the 28th Army, together with the 70th Army, Colonel General V.S. Popov, whose combat path began from the walls of the Brest Fortress on June 22, 1941, having launched an offensive from three sides in the Brest direction, captured the city and defeated up to four German divisions in the forests west of Brest. On July 27, the 28th Army went northwest of the city to the Western Bug. The withdrawal routes of the Brest enemy grouping to the west were cut off. On July 28, the troops of the 61st Army, Colonel General

P.A. Belov, with the assistance of part of the forces of the 70th and 28th armies, liberated Brest.

The troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front were rapidly advancing towards the Vistula. On July 24, the 2nd Tank Army, commanded by Major General A.I. Radzievsky and Chuikov's army occupied Lublin.

Three kilometers from the city, the first "factory of death" was discovered - Majdanek. While liberating the occupied territories, Soviet soldiers at every turn encountered barbarism and atrocities that accompanied the imposition of the "new order", saw devastated cities and execution ditches, "scorched earth" and concentration camps, knew about Babi Yar, but Majdanek was so striking with the concentration of sadism and inhumanity in at one point that the BBC refused to believe its own correspondent's reports: "For there was a huge industrial enterprise where thousands of 'ordinary' Germans worked full-time to exterminate millions of other people, participating in a kind of mass orgy of professional sadism - that even worse, treating what is happening with businesslike confidence that this is the same work as any other.

Even Chuikov, who had seen a lot of things, by his own admission, could not bring himself to visit the death camp. But it was shown to thousands of Soviet soldiers and had a huge impact on the Red Army. According to Werth's memoirs, they remembered the "smell of Majdanek" as they made their way to the west, and if the political officers spoke of a liberation mission, the soldiers thought of retribution: "So, there were" simple

Fritz" of the 1944 model, and at the same time there were thousands of Himmler's professional killers. But was there any clear line between them? Didn't the "simple Fritzes" take part in the destruction of the "partisan villages"? And, in any case, didn't the "simple Fritz" approve of what they were doing

his

colleagues in the SS troops and the Gestapo? Or did he disapprove? This is the psychological and political problem that was supposed to bring the Soviet government and the Red Army ... a lot of worries.

Continuing the offensive, on July 25, Radzievsky's tankers reached the Vistula in the Demblin area. However, the army did not have heavy pontoon parks and could not cross the rivers on the move. By order of the front commander, General Radzievsky handed over his sector to the 1st Army of the Polish Army, brought into battle from the second echelon, and he himself began to develop an offensive along the right bank of the river towards Warsaw. The Polish units were to cross the Vistula in the Deblin direction and seize a bridgehead on the western bank.

On July 27, Kolpakchi's 69th Army entered the river. Its troops crossed the river near Puława on the move and by the 29th they had captured the bridgehead. The attempt of the Polish army was unsuccessful. But on the morning of August 1, the 8th Guards Army began forcing in the Magnushev area. During the day, the Chuikovites captured a bridgehead 15 km wide and up to 10 km deep.

On July 28, the troops of the 8th Guards Army, the 1st Army of the Polish Army, brought into battle from the second echelon of the front, and the 69th Army advanced to the Vistula, disrupting the interaction between the Army Groups "Center" and "Northern Ukraine".

The command of the front set the tankers of Radzievsky the task of capturing the suburbs of Warsaw - Prague and, together with Gusev's 47th army, cutting off the enemy's escape route to the west. This task failed.

Field Marshal Model eventually managed to organize stubborn resistance to Soviet troops on the Baltic border with East Prussia, near Białystok, southeast of Warsaw. The enemy now not only stubbornly defended himself, but also sought to deliver sensitive counterattacks involving a large number of tanks. Expecting the further development of the offensive of the 1st Belorussian Front on Warsaw, the Germans concentrated southeast of it on the right bank of a strong

grouping of five armored and one infantry divisions. They intended to crush the left wing of the front with a strong counterattack in the south, disrupt the crossing of the Vistula by the troops and the attack on Warsaw. In case of failure, defensive positions were prepared on the outskirts of Prague.

On July 27, a fierce battle unfolded in the area of Prague and Siedlce, in which the 2nd Tank and 47th Armies, the 11th Tank and 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps participated from the Soviet side. In battles with units of the 4th and 19th tank divisions, the Viking, Totenkopf, and Hermann Goering divisions, which took place under the dominance of German aviation in the air, Radzievsky's army lost about 500 tanks. At the same time, the troops of Chuikov and Kolpakchi waged stubborn battles to expand the bridgeheads on the Vistula in the Magnuszew area and southwest of Puławy. In early August, neither side was able to carry out their intentions.

On July 28, the Headquarters clarified the tasks of the fronts. The Baltic fronts were obliged to inflict decisive blows on Army Group North. Bagramyan's troops were tasked with striking at Riga and Klaipėda, cutting communications,

linking Army Group North with East Prussia. The armies of the Leningrad Front were to advance through Northern Estonia. The 3rd Belorussian Front was supposed to capture Kaunas no later than August 2 and by August 10, by all means, reach the border with East Prussia. Zakharov's troops were ordered to develop the offensive in the direction of Lomza, Ostroleka, overcome the Narew and advance along the Greater Poland Lowland to Mława with the main forces. Rokossovsky received an order, advancing with the right wing on Warsaw, to capture Prague no later than August 8 and, having crossed the Vistula, "strike in a north-western direction, paralyze the enemy defenses along the Narew and Vistula and plan an attack on Torun and Lodz." To the south, the 1st Ukrainian Front was preparing to attack Krakow. By a special directive of July 29, Zhukov and Vasilevsky were instructed not only to coordinate the actions of six fronts, but also to directly lead the troops.

Chernyakhovsky's troops, having completed the Vilnius operation, during the second half of July fought fierce battles with large enemy forces at the turn of the Neman River and prepared to continue the offensive. The German command sought to delay the advance of the Soviet Army to the borders of Germany and eliminate the bridgeheads on the left bank of the Neman. By the end of July, 10 infantry and two tank divisions, two infantry brigades and 30 separate regiments and battalions were drawn to the Kaunas direction against the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front.

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command set the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front the task of developing an offensive in the Kaunas direction and, no later than August 1-2, with a strike by the 39th Army, together with the 5th Guards Tank Army from the north and the 5th and 33rd armies from the south, to capture the city Kaunas. Until August 10, the troops of the front were to reach the border of East Prussia and firmly gain a foothold in preparation for the invasion of its territory.

On July 28, Chernyakhovsky's troops went on the offensive with all armies. The attack was preceded by a 40-minute artillery preparation. Overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the troops of the right wing of the front advanced 10-17 km by the end of July 29, and the troops of the center and left wing - 5-15 km.

On July 30, the resistance of the enemy at the turn of the Neman was finally broken. In the zone of the 33rd Army, the 2nd Guards Tank Corps was introduced into the breakthrough, which, with the support of aviation, rapidly advanced 35 km and started fighting for Vilkavishkis. The successful actions of the tank corps created a threat of encirclement of the Kaunas grouping of German troops and forced it to retreat in front of the left

flank of the 5th and in the zone of the 33rd armies. The Soviet troops began to pursue. Using the success of the tank corps, the troops of the 33rd Army on July 31 captured the city and the railway station of Marijampole (Kapsukas), and the 5th Army broke into Kaunas and cleared most of the city from the enemy by evening. By the morning of August 1, Kaunas - the most important enemy defense center on the outskirts of East Prussia - was completely liberated. North of Kaunas, the 39th and 5th Guards Tank Armies were successfully advancing. By the beginning of August, the troops of the front advanced up to 50 km and expanded the breakthrough to 230 km. They liberated more than 900 settlements and reached the line of Kedainiai, Kaunas, Pilvishki, Marijampole.

On August 2, 1944, the 1st division of the 142nd cannon brigade of the 33rd army made the first artillery shelling of the territory of the Third Reich. East Prussia was 10-20 km away.

During August, enemy troops launched strong counterattacks northwest and west of Kaunas. Having repelled them, by the end of the month, the front troops advanced another 30-50 km and with the main forces reached the enemy fortified positions prepared in advance on the line east of Raseiniai, Kybartai, Suwalki.

As a result of the Kaunas operation, the troops under the command of Chernyakhovsky reached the borders of East Prussia, taking their starting positions for the inevitable invasion.

The German command, meanwhile, was pulling up formations to the left front of the troops of the 1st Baltic Front, especially to Tukums, Dobeles and Siauliai. The Germans sought to eliminate the Siauliai-Jelgava ledge with counter strikes and restore the direct connection of Army Group Center with the right wing of Army Group North. To do this, it regrouped large forces of tank and motorized troops in the Siauliai region.

On August 2, the enemy, with forces of up to six infantry divisions, supported by tanks, struck from the north at Birzhai, Panevezys, at the junction of the troops of Kreizer and Beloborodov. The 357th Rifle Division of the 43rd Army, which had pulled ahead, commanded by General A.G. Kudryavtsev, was surrounded. Her repeated attempts to break through to her success did not bring. The city of Birzhai passed from hand to hand, but on August 3rd-August was abandoned by the Soviet troops. In Moscow, "Comrade Semyonov" reacted to these events. He waved the phone and said, "This is not forty-one. Rescue the division at all costs."

Bagramyan reinforced Beloborodov's army with a rifle corps from his reserve and the 19th tank corps - 200 tanks and self-propelled guns - Lieutenant General I.D. Vasiliev from the Stavka reserve. On August 5, two rifle and tank corps went on the offensive, which turned into an oncoming one with the enemy grouping and developed very slowly. The Germans met the Soviet tanks with fire from self-propelled guns from ambush, Vasiliev's brigades suffered significant losses. Within a day and a half of continuous fighting, it was possible to advance by 8-9 km. Finally, on the night of August 7, attacking with lit headlights and open hatches, the tank corps made a hole in the German defenses and released Kudryavtsev's division. The enemy grouping in the Birzhai area was driven back.

Perhaps it was time to go on the defensive. Further advance to the west was dangerous. Intelligence noted an increasingly active transfer of enemy tank and infantry columns from East Prussia to the Siauliai region, to the zone of operations of the 2nd Guards Army, but could not obtain specific information about the forces and deployment of the enemy. The headquarters still demanded that Bagramyan continue the offensive, primarily to Riga, since the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts, advancing from the east, met with stubborn resistance and were forced to stop 150 km from the capital of Latvia. However, all Kreiser's attempts

to force the Lielupe River and create a bridgehead for the entry of a mechanized corps failed. At the request of Vasilevsky, the 4th Shock Army was returned to the 1st Baltic Front and the transfer of the 5th Guards Tank Army began. The direction of the main attack was decided to be transferred to the zone of Malyshev's army, which was advancing on Riga along the Daugava from Krustpils.

Starting from August 16, the enemy, having concentrated six armored and motorized divisions "Grossdeutschland", began to strike blow after blow under the base of the Soviet troops' salient at Siauliai and along the top - at Tukums and Dobeles. To reinforce the troops of Chanchibadze and Kreizer, the front commander transferred all reserves, a tank and mechanized corps, as well as the 5th Guards Tank Army, which arrived on August 17, commanded by Lieutenant General V.T. Volsky. True, there were a little more than three dozen serviceable combat vehicles in the army. In addition, the arrival of four anti-tank artillery brigades was expected. The front opposed the massive use of tanks

massive artillery and tens of thousands of anti-tank mines and managed to stabilize the situation near Siauliai. For the final resolution of the imminent crisis, Vasilevsky and Bagramyan decided to transfer the main forces of the 6th Guards Army to Siauliai. However, these measures came too late.

On August 20, the Germans attacked Tukums from two sides, simultaneously landing troops on the coast of the Gulf of Riga. A day later, the defense of the 1st Rifle Corps of the Kreizer army collapsed, two divisions were surrounded and forced to break through to the Jelgava-Dobele line. Thus, the enemy managed to push back the Soviet troops from the Gulf of Riga and restore the land connection of Army Group North with East Prussia, creating a corridor up to 50 km wide through Riga.

They say that when the Soviet troops reached the Baltic Sea, General Bagramyan sent Stalin a bottle of Baltic water. But while this bottle reached the Kremlin, the Germans managed to recapture the bridgehead. Stalin already knew about this and, when they handed him the bottle, he said: "Return it to Comrade Bagramyan, let him pour it into the Baltic Sea" ...

Until mid-September, the 1st Baltic Front fought hard in areas west and northwest of Siauliai, repelling strong counterattacks by the enemy, who sought to expand the corridor along the Baltic coast.

By the beginning of August, Rokossovsky's troops reached the line west of Surazh, Tsekhanovets, north of Siedlce, Kalishin, east of Prague and further south along the Vistula and continued fighting for Prague and expanding bridgeheads.

On August 2, the Germans launched a counterattack between Siedlce and Prague with three armored and one infantry divisions. The tank army of Radzievsky retreated, but, having organized the defense, fought back for three days, until the approach of the 47th army. By this time, having crossed the Bug, the 48th, 65th, 47th, 70th armies began to leave for Warsaw. The enemy retreated behind the Vistula and Narew and concentrated his efforts on eliminating the Magnushevsky and Pulawy bridgeheads. The 2nd Panzer Army was put into reserve on 6 August.

Having repulsed the counterattacks, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front resumed their offensive. The fighting became more intense, especially on the outskirts of Prague and the bridgeheads. The front failed to achieve significant success.

Having reached the line of Jelgava, Dobele, Siauliai, Augustow, the Narew and Vistula rivers, on August 29, 1944, Soviet troops officially completed Operation Bagration, the largest strategic operation of the Red Army. Its scope and scale were grandiose. As part of the advancing Soviet troops, taking into account the reserves that arrived during the battles, there were more than 2.5 million people, more than 45,000 guns and

mortars, more than 6,000 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts, more than 5,000 combat aircraft. The battle unfolded over a space covering up to 1000 km along the front and up to 600 km in depth. As a result of two-month battles, Soviet troops defeated 38 enemy divisions, 26 of them were completely destroyed.

The losses of the German ground forces on the fronts were the highest in the entire war, not counting the victorious spring of 1945: in July they amounted to 59 thousand killed and 310 thousand missing, in August - 64 thousand and 408 thousand. During Operation Bagration, the Germans lost up to 400,000 soldiers and officers killed, wounded and captured. Of the 47 German generals who fought on the front line as commanders of corps and divisions, 10 died and 22 were captured. In 1946-1947, all "Belarusian" generals were passed through the courts of military tribunals. commandant

Mogilev Ermansdorf for war crimes was publicly hanged at the Minsk Hippodrome; the commandant of Bobruisk, General Khman, was sentenced to death. The rest were stripped of their stripes and sentenced to 10 to 25 years.

According to General Butlar, "the defeat of Army Group Center put an end to the organized resistance of the Germans in the East."

The total losses of the four Soviet fronts and the 1st Army of the Polish Army from June 23 to August 29 amounted to 770 thousand people, of which 180 thousand are irretrievable, 2957 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2447 guns and mortars, 822 aircraft.

POLISH QUESTION

There has long been a tradition of mutual distrust between Poles and Russians. "It was always impossible for the Poles to obtain political guarantees from any of their neighbors," A. Clark points out, "because they all coveted Polish lands and preferred to appropriate them instead of defending them."

The Bolsheviks never "liked" independent Poland either. And I didn't really like it. Immediately after the October Revolution, having declared the right of nations to self-determination, the Leninist government proceeded to the sovietization of all the territories that were previously part of the Russian Empire. Polish patriots, who aspired to revive the national state on the ruins of the collapsed state, which ceased to exist after the violent partition of 1795, were immediately enlisted in the "contra".

Already in January 1918, the Cheka began to purposefully pursue a policy of terror against them. At the Headquarters, a special Commission "for the fight against Polish counter-revolutionary troops" was established, the main task of which was "the extermination of counter-revolutionary instigators among the Polish troops." Even from this short excerpt it follows that the majority of the Poles turned out to be the "instigators". Therefore, "the commission found it possible to declare all Polish troops outside the law."

On January 28, military counterintelligence reported to Dzerzhinsky:

"Several battalions have been allocated in the front-line troops operating against the counter-revolutionaries to fight the Poles and Romanians. We pay 12 rubles a day with enhanced nutrition. Of the hired units sent against the legionnaires, two detachments were singled out: one of the best shooters for the execution of Polish officers, the other from Lithuanians and Latvians for spoiling food supplies in Vitebsk, Minsk and Mogilev provinces, in places of concentration of Polish troops. Some local peasants also agree to attack the Poles and exterminate them »».

The Polish people, for the most part, turned out to be immune to the "bacilli of Bolshevism", and the Polish leaders did not want to lead them into the communist barracks. On the basis of these political differences, sharp conflicts began in 1919, which then escalated into armed clashes between Soviet Russia.

and reborn after the Treaty of Versailles as a sovereign Polish state. In July 1920, the Red Army reached the Vistula and bypassed Warsaw, the issue of Sovietization of Poland seemed to Lenin already resolved and not the most important, he imagined red banners all over Europe. These days the "leader of the world proletariat" telegraphed Stalin:

"Zinoviev, Kamenev, and also I think that the revolution should be encouraged at once in Italy. My personal opinion is that for this it is necessary to Sovietize Hungary, and

maybe also the Czech Republic and Romania."

However, the campaign for world revolution failed miserably. Tukhachevsky's troops suffered a crushing defeat.

On March 18, 1921, a peace treaty was signed in Riga between the RSFSR and "bourgeois-landowner Poland", according to which the Bolsheviks, who lost the war, recognized the border significantly east of the Curzon line and pledged to pay 10 million gold rubles indemnity. In addition, both sides decided to mutually respect state sovereignty, refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs, from hostile propaganda and "any kind of intervention", and also not to create or support organizations on their territory aimed at armed struggle with the other contracting party. .

Without exaggeration, we can say that the entire Soviet state was created precisely as such an "organization", in which other "organizations" functioned - the Comintern, the OGPU, the Intelligence Directorate, the Illegal Military Organization at the Headquarters of the Red Army, Special Purpose Units ... We did not have time, figuratively speaking, to dry the ink under this treaty, as the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic began to develop a plan for the invasion of the Polish border territories of "partisan detachments" to carry out terrorist actions against the civilian population there. Ilyich was delighted with this idea. "Great plan! he wrote to E.M. Sklyansky. Finish it with Dzerzhinsky. Under the guise of "greens" (we will blame them later), we will go 10-20 versts and hang kulaks, priests and landowners. Prize: 100,000 rubles for the hanged man..."

The plan was actively implemented until the mid-1920s. They led the "Red Partisan" gangs on the territory of the country with which there was an agreement on peace and good neighborly relations, career officers of the Red Army; they shot and hanged clearly whom - "White Poles". K.P. Orlovsky, one of these heroes of the "invisible front", wrote in his autobiography about his "combat work":

"From 1920 to 1925, on the instructions of the Intelligence Agency, he worked in the rear of the White Poles, on the territory of Western Belarus, as the head of the section, or rather, he was the organizer and commander of the Red Partisan detachments and sabotage groups, where, in five years, I made several dozen combat operations, namely: G[. Three passenger trains were stopped, 2. One Zhel was blown up. Dor. Bridge... 6. In 1924 alone, more than 100 people were killed on my initiative and personally. gendarmes and landowners.

Despite the carefully fanned "popular anger", the revolution did not happen in Poland. It was expensive to pay for the piece work of saboteurs and executioners, the Polish state was strengthening and the Border Guard Corps successfully caught partisans, in addition, the USSR sought recognition in the international arena. The Orlovskys and the Vaupshasovs had to be recalled. Hymns to these heroes are still sung to this day. It turns out: "It was not banditry, as the Polish authorities tried to present the partisan movement. Volunteer partisans, having crossed the unjust border imposed by violence, entered the land of their people and fought for it. For example, the "indigenous Belarusian" S.A. Vaupshasov. Moreover, these officers of the foreign

intelligence agencies who received bonuses for each killed: "... had much more moral rights to it (Belarusian land) than the conquerors from Poland."

In 1932, a non-aggression pact was signed with Poland, which, as time has shown, in the eyes of the Kremlin leadership was cheaper than the paper on which it was written.

Well, the faithful Leninist Stalin did not like "fascist Poland" and haughty Poles. In this, his feelings absolutely coincided with the feelings of Adolf Hitler. The Polish government reciprocated the Bolsheviks, but passionately wanted to be friends with the Nazis and selflessly eager to share the unfortunate Czechoslovakia with them.

Therefore, when in 1939 the Fuhrer proposed to the Kremlin to divide spheres of influence in Europe and carry out the fourth partition of Poland, the Soviet Secretary General happily approved the pact with Germany and, most importantly, the secret protocols to it. In a conversation with G. Dimitrov, Stalin clarified his position: "The destruction of this state in the current conditions would mean one less bourgeois fascist state! What would be bad if, as a result of the defeat of Poland, we extended the socialist system to new territories and populations.

Indefinitely decided not to postpone. A week after the signing of the pact, there was a provocation in Gleiwitz, and | September German tank wedges ripped open Poland. On the morning of September 17 in Moscow, the Polish ambassador was handed a note from the Soviet government, which stated: "The Polish state and its government have actually ceased to exist. Thus, the treaties concluded between the USSR and Poland ceased to be valid. Left to itself and left without leadership, Poland has become a convenient field for all sorts of accidents and surprises that could pose a threat to the USSR. Therefore, being hitherto neutral, the Soviet government cannot be more neutral about these facts ... the Soviet government ordered the High Command of the Red Army to order the troops to cross the border and take under their protection the lives and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. By this time, Soviet troops had already set out on the Liberation Campaign and, in unanimous agreement with the Wehrmacht, began to eliminate, according to Molotov's definition, "the ugly offspring of the Treaty of Versailles."

By early October it was all over. Comrades in arms celebrated the victory with joint parades and banquets. After that, "in the manner of friendly mutual consent," they began to develop the acquired territories. Germany declared its part a protectorate. Communist Politburo adopted | October the program of Sovietization of the western regions, which began to be strictly implemented. Elected on October 22, the People's Assemblies of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus proclaimed Soviet power and asked to be included in the Soviet Union. On November 1-2, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR granted their request.

Over the next two years, the population living here was taught to live in the "fraternal family of the Soviet peoples." The methods have already been worked out: nationalization, confiscation, dispossession, collectivization, class struggle and terror. The organs of the NKVD, which descended after the troops, first of all arrested political and statesmen, high-ranking officials, military men, capitalists and the landed aristocracy. These people were not fit to build a brighter future. "The worst enemies of the working people" were declared Polish settlers, who, without exception, with their families - 137,000 people - were evicted to special settlements in the Volga region, Kazakhstan and "sunny Komi". They were followed by police officers, court officials, prosecutors, cultural figures, priests, teachers, doctors, agronomists, kulaks and other alien elements. In 1939-1941 in the territory

western regions were repressed 10 percent of the population of all nationalities. The last train with the deportees left Brest on June 21, 1941.

Polish government headed by General Sikorski, created in France

September 30, 1939 and later moved to London, did not recognize the territorial changes made in Poland. Stalin did not give a damn about their opinion. It seemed that the Polish question had been finally and irrevocably resolved.

But then the Nazi attack broke out, and all the cunning Stalinist plans suddenly went to dust. The only ally of the Soviet Union turned out to be "imperialist" Great Britain, which, during the period of friendship with Hitler, Foreign Minister V.M. Molotov accused of attacking peace-loving Germany and unleashing the Second World War. Churchill, behind whom stood the economic power of the United States, extended a helping hand, and Stalin was in dire need of this help: the Red Army suffered defeat after defeat, leaving the enemy colossal territories, human and material resources. True, the Polish government of Vladislav Sikorsky was sitting in London, fighting for the freedom and independence of their country, but Stalin was not interested in theoretical issues at a time when the Wehrmacht stood at the gates of Smolensk.

On July 30, 1941, the Soviet and Polish governments in exile signed an agreement on the restoration of diplomatic relations and the creation of a Polish army on the territory of the USSR "under the command appointed by the Polish government." The Soviet Union and Poland mutually undertook to provide each other with all kinds of assistance and support in the war against Nazi Germany. Moreover, the government of the USSR recognized the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 as invalid. The following protocol was attached to the Soviet-Polish agreement: "The Soviet government grants amnesty to all Polish citizens who are now imprisoned on Soviet territory as prisoners of war or on other sufficient grounds since the restoration of diplomatic relations." In accordance with this protocol, on August 12, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council on the amnesty of "all Polish citizens" was adopted. Polish citizenship was determined on a national basis.

At the same time, the formation of the 75,000-strong army of General Anders began in the Trans-Volga region. A significant contingent in the army was released prisoners of war, prisoners and special settlers. In addition, with the consent of the Soviet government, 200 Polish pilots were sent to England to recruit Polish aviation units. In December, General Sikorsky arrived in Moscow and confirmed the Poles' promise to fight against the Germans shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army. The Polish embassy appeared in Kuibyshev. In the western regions of Belarus and Ukraine, the Polish population and detachments of the Home Army helped the Soviet partisans in the fight against a common enemy.

However, the idyll did not last long. The Poles demanded the return of the Ukrainian and Byelorussian lands, and foolishly flaunted their anti-Sovietism at every step. So, for two years in Soviet prisons, General Anders developed a persistent allergy to Russians, and already in January 1942 he began to demand that his troops be sent to Iran. His officers also did not want to fight alongside the Muscovites and complained about poor rations. In the end, on the eve of the Battle of Stalingrad, Anders' army, armed with Soviet funds in the most difficult time for the USSR, went to the Middle East to guard the British oil fields. As A. Werth testifies: "The departure of the Poles impressed the Russians with the flight of rats from the ship, which, as it seemed to them, drowned."

After the Battle of Stalingrad, Stalin no longer doubted victory and that the Red Army would succeed in capturing Poland and establishing a regime pleasing to him there.

The government of Sikorsky naively considered it possible to restore an independent Polish state within the boundaries defined by the Treaty of Riga.

A crisis in relations was inevitable; in the spring of 1943, a "convenient

happening". On March 13, Berlin spread a message that mass graves of Polish citizens allegedly shot by the NKVD in the spring of 1940 were discovered in the Katyn forest near Smolensk. On March 20, 1943, the Polish government in exile, along with the German government, applied to the International Committee of the Red Cross with a request to investigate this fact. In response, the Soviet government accused the Polish government of collaborating with Hitler and broke off diplomatic relations with him on April 25.

Stalin pointed out to Churchill in a letter dated April 21, 1943: "... The slanderous campaign hostile to the Soviet Union launched by the German fascists about the officers killed by them in the Smolensk region, in the territory occupied by German troops, was immediately picked up by the government of Mr. Sikorsky and in every possible way kindled by the Polish official press. The government of Mr. Sikorsky not only did not rebuff the vile fascist slander against the USSR, but did not even consider it necessary to turn to the Soviet Government with any questions or explanations on this matter ... "

The allies in the anti-Hitler coalition, at a time when all efforts were aimed at defeating Germany and its satellites, did not want to complicate relations with the Kremlin and fan the scandal that played into the hands of the Germans. Moreover, at the Tehran conference, they actually recognized the pre-war Soviet territorial acquisitions and the right of the USSR to have as its neighbor not a sovereign, but a "friendly state".

Historical experience shows that only communists could be a friend of the Soviet communists, and those who were sensitive to the voice of Moscow. For example, Tito or Mao turned out to be worse than enemies - they were "wrong" communists and built "wrong" communism. Stalin could not let such an important matter take its course. In 1942, as the successor to the Communist Party of Poland, which was crushed by him in 1938, the Polish Workers' Party was created, which on January 1, 1944 announced the formation of the People's Craiova Rada, headed by Bolesław Bierut, with its "people's military organization" - the People's Army, operating in the occupied territories. At the same time, in the Soviet Union, the Tadeusz Kosciuszko Division was formed from "reliable" Poles, and then the 1st Polish Army under the command of General Sigmund Berling, one of the few officers who refused to follow Anders. For even greater reliability, it included many Soviet citizens of Polish nationality, agents of vigilant "organs" and regular Soviet officers. For example, Karol Swierchewsky was a member of the Military Council of the Army, about whom Rokossovsky writes: "He served from private to general with us, in the Red Guard and the Red Army, commanded an international brigade in Republican Spain." The commander of the 3rd division, Brigadier General Stanislav Galitsky, was also an officer of the Red Army, who changed his cap to a confederate cap on the orders of the party. In total, up to 20 thousand Soviet officers were recruited in the Polish Army. Yes, and Rokossovsky himself will soon become the Marshal of "independent" Poland.

From cooperation with the Craiova Army, it was ordered to move on to open confrontation: the detachments of Polish insurgents were to be disarmed, their commanders to be shot. One of the consequences of this decision was the forced withdrawal at the beginning of 1944 of Soviet partisans from a number of regions of Western Belarus - the local population refused them their support.

On July 21, 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PCNL) was formed, headed by chairman Edward Bolesław Osóbka.

Moravsky. At the same time, the Rada took over the leadership of the 1st Polish Army and decided to unite it with the People's Army into a single Polish Army. General Mikhail Rola-Zhymersky was appointed commander-in-chief. Barely July 22

troops of the 69th Army liberated the Polish city of Chelm, as the PKNO published a manifesto in which the first thing the Polish government in exile was declared illegal and proclaimed "people's power". Four days later, an "Agreement between the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Polish Committee of National Liberation on relations between the Soviet Commander-in-Chief and the Polish administration after the entry of Soviet troops into Poland" was signed in Moscow.

In fact, the Soviet government had already officially recognized the puppet pro-communist government of Poland. These days, Stalin, not without irony, wrote to the British Prime Minister:

"We do not want and will not create our own administration in Poland, because we do not want to interfere in the internal affairs of Poland. This must be done by the Poles themselves... The Polish Committee of National Liberation intends to set about creating an administration on Polish territory, and this, I hope, will be carried out. In Poland, we did not find any other forces that could create a Polish administration. The so-called underground organizations, led by the Polish Government in London, turned out to be ephemeral, devoid of influence ... "

The destruction and capture of more than 300 thousand members of these "ephemeral" organizations has become one of the urgent tasks of the Red Army and state security agencies.

"In the early days, the situation in Poland remained difficult," recalls the PMC of the 1st Ukrainian Front, General Krainyukov. - Reports coming from the military councils of the armies, from commanders, political agencies and commandant's offices, testified that the so-called "plenipotentiary representatives" of the Polish government in exile in London strove in some places to arbitrarily seize the local government, trying to push back the real representatives of the people's power. There were sorties and provocations by alien elements."

At a meeting of the GKO held in early August, the Supreme Commander explained the political line to the specially invited members of the Military Councils of the fronts. "The chairman of the State Defense Committee said," recalls General Krainyukov, PMC of the 1st Ukrainian Front, "that we will not create any administration on the territory of Poland and we will not establish our own rules either. We should not interfere in the internal affairs of a liberated country. This is the sovereign right of the Poles themselves. The Polish Committee of National Liberation was formed. He will create his own administration. A close relationship should be maintained with the PCNW, no other authority should be recognized.

- I repeat, do not recognize any other authority, except for the Polish Committee of National Liberation! »

For the third time, the Red Army came to Poland under the slogans of "delivering the Polish people from the Nazi yoke, from national humiliation, from slavery" and restoring "an independent, strong and democratic Poland." The ideas of class struggle and revolution were shelved for the post-war period.

The Committee has its headquarters in Lublin. The committee's decrees, dictated from the Kremlin, were supported by all the "authority" of the Soviet military commandant's offices.

Meanwhile, in Poland and Western Belarus there was a well-organized and widespread underground, led from London. The most massive and authoritative organization was the Craiova Army under the command of General Tadeusz Bur-Komarovsky. With the arrival of the Red Army in the western regions of Belarus, the AK detachments operating there were destroyed or

taken prisoner. As early as July 20, the headquarters of the NKVD troops for the protection of the rear of the 3rd Belorussian Front issued an order to detain persons belonging to the armed formations of the émigré government. This order summarized the experience of the operation carried out two days earlier, when the fighters of the united grouping of the Vilna and Novogrudok districts of the Home Army were surrounded and captured, who actively participated, together with the troops of Chernyakhovsky, in the liberation of Vilnius from the Germans. They were disarmed and, under the escort of the 86th border regiment, were escorted to the town of Medniki, and then sent deep into the USSR.

After the appeals of the Lublin Committee, its recognition by the Soviet government, Stalin's statements and the news of the disarmament of the AK detachments, the Polish government in London decided that it was time to show the whole world who had real military power in the country and enjoyed the support of the population. The Tempest plan was to liberate Warsaw on its own before the approach of the Red Army. The RAF would then bring in an exile government from London, which would take its rightful place in Poland's capital. The main goal: "... Soviet troops entering Warsaw must find it in Polish hands and be confronted with the fact of the presence of Polish civil and military authorities as the legitimate owners of the capital of the republic." The moment was chosen well: Rokossovsky's armies crossed the Vistula and went to Prague, and the German administration in Warsaw began to curtail its activities.

On August 1, an uprising began in the city. It was headed by Bur-Komarovsky, who had 20 thousand fighters under his command. Detachments of the People's Army and other patriotic forces joined him. In total, up to 40 thousand people took part in the hostilities against the German garrison. By August 6, they had almost the entire city under their control, significantly replenished their stocks of weapons at the expense of the Germans, and were already preparing to meet the first emissaries from London. However, they failed to capture the railway stations and bridges across the Vistula.

Hitler ordered the uprising to be crushed mercilessly and Warsaw to be razed to the ground. SS units were introduced into the city, which waged a methodical war of total annihilation. A separate SS assault brigade under the command of Oskar Dirlewanger, staffed by German criminals recruited in concentration camps, "Eastern volunteers" and punishers of all stripes, won a particularly bloody glory for their atrocities in Warsaw. After the successes gained in the first week, the position of the rebels steadily worsened. They did not have tanks, heavy weapons, they did not have enough food, medicine, and ammunition. British planes broke through to Warsaw at night and dropped the necessary cargo, but these deliveries were insignificant and often ended up in the location of German and even Soviet troops. From August 12, Bur-Komarovsky continuously asked for help from London, which, in turn, turned to Moscow. But the Red Army in the direction of Warsaw was seized by a strange stupor.

But really, why would Comrade Stalin suddenly give political control over Poland to Mikolajczyk's government? And forty years later, Soviet propaganda branded the Warsaw uprising as a "political sabotage" organized by the Polish reaction.

True, the sudden stop of Rokossovsky's armies, which had recently been rapidly rushing to the Vistula, was due to purely military reasons: increased enemy resistance, heavy losses, stretched communications, lack of ammunition, and fatigue of the troops. All this is so. However, remember that just three days before the start of the uprising, the Headquarters planned a deep operation on Polish territory with access to the Torun, Lodz, Czestochowa, Krakow line - 150 km west of Warsaw, Marshal Zhukov was entrusted with the direct leadership of three fronts at once,

Rokossovsky, Zakharov and Konev received corresponding instructions. None of the marshals objected to this and did not complain about the "fatigue of the troops". Nevertheless, an unprecedented case, the instructions of the Headquarters were not carried out. The 1st Belorussian Front was inactive until September.

Indeed, at the beginning of August, the Germans launched a counterattack on the Warsaw forefield, but it was repulsed, and on August 6 there was a lull here. A few more

days, attacks on the Magnushevsky and Pulawy bridgeheads ceased. "The Nazis, having received a rebuff, finally abandoned attempts to push us into the Vistula ... The time has come for a quiet defensive or, more precisely, trench life," writes V.I. Chuikov. The fact is that by mid-August, the tank divisions of the Army Group "Center" went to the Baltic states to break through the corridor to the Army Group "North". The same six divisions that Bagramyan fought off near Siauliai and Tukums. Parts of the 4th SS Panzer Corps came to grips with the insurgents in Warsaw. But even then the Soviet armies on the Vistula did not budge. Rokossovsky, Batov, Chuikov - all our commanders, in their memories from the last days of July, jump to September, and it's hard to understand what they were doing in August. It is only known that Chuikov and Rokossovsky went to the bathhouse. Warsaw still held out. The former head of the political department of the 47th Army, General M.Kh. Kalashnik confuses "both dates and names." First, he writes: "By the beginning of August, our troops reached the Warsaw bypass ...", and ten pages later he regretfully reports: "The Warsaw uprising ... We learned about it when our troops were still far from the Polish capital and could not provide needed help

insurgent."

Finally, on August 29, a directive from the Headquarters followed: the troops of the 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts to continue the offensive, reach the Narew River and seize bridgeheads. Immediately everything began to move, the commanders came out of lethargy. The former commander-65 writes: "Rokossovsky warned me: "At the moment, time is working against us, if you give the enemy the opportunity to gather strength, then it will not be possible to force the Narew on the move. Now, more than ever, we need pace and pace. Please note that Marshal Zhukov conveyed Stalin's categorical demand: in the first days of September, the troops should be behind the Narew.

The 3rd Army of the 2nd Belorussian Front made its way to the river, on September 6 captured the city and fortress of Ostrolenka, and on September 16 - Lomzha. However, she failed to overcome the Narew. Rokossovsky's troops, acting with the forces of the 28th, 65th and 48th armies, crossed the Narew on September 5, captured bridgeheads in the areas of Ruzhan and Serotsk, and until September 9, repelling German counterattacks, fought for their expansion.

1] September Rokossovsky moved to Prague the 47th, 70th, partly the 1st army of the Polish Army, the 8th tank corps and cleared it of the enemy in three days (according to the previous directive, he had to do this on August 8). By this time, the Poles in the city were on their last legs. Having established contact with the rebels, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front began to support them with air strikes and artillery, drop weapons, ammunition, and medicines by parachute. These facts, according to communist historians, "refute the attempts of the enemies of the Soviet Union and people's Poland to downplay Soviet assistance to the Warsaw insurgents."

Naturally, Stalin was not a political imbecile to announce aloud that he did not need either the Mikolajczyk government or the Polish troops subordinate only to him in Poland. Even the American "flying fortresses" reached Warsaw and dropped containers, how could one explain the inaction of the Soviet aviation, based 150 km from the city? But he refused to allow Anglo-American planes to land on Soviet airfields, arguing that "Soviet

the government does not want to have any direct or indirect relationship with the Warsaw

adventure." (Interestingly, all foreign authors mention some kind of provocative appeal of the Moscow radio of July 29, which spoke of the impending liberation of the city, and "resistance workers" called for an uprising against the retreating enemy. This call led to a premature "explosion".)

On September 15, the Supreme Commander ordered the 1st Army of the Polish Army to conduct reconnaissance in force: cross the Vistula, seize bridgeheads directly in Warsaw and establish contact with the rebels. The river was to be crossed by the 3rd Infantry Division, reinforced by six Soviet artillery brigades, a mortar regiment, and six artillery battalions. She was assigned three engineering battalions and a battalion of floating vehicles. During the crossing from 16 to 20 September, three Polish regiments crossed to the left bank of the river. They were tightly blocked by the Germans on the so-called Chernyakov bridgehead and could not break through to the city center. Rokossovsky decided to stop the operation. Having suffered significant losses, parts of the division returned to the east coast.

"This failure is due primarily to the fact that the crossing of the Vistula was carried out locally (and why, in fact, by one division, if there were three armies available?), For its implementation on a larger scale than there were no conditions (what?). Due to the prevailing situation, it was launched without deep and detailed reconnaissance of the enemy (again, why?). In addition, the treacherous behavior of the leadership of the Warsaw Uprising had an extremely negative effect on the forcing (and this is an infamy committed by a team of authors to please the Kremlin Customer. An honest historian would repeat after Vilem Prechan: "... there are things around which the historian must walk on tiptoe when writing about events during which people put their lives in danger and were ready to sacrifice the most valuable thing, regardless of whether they were guided by a sense of duty, human responsibility, loyalty to moral principles, or simply protest against injustice and inhumanity "), which, pursuing its own selfish goals, did not organize a single blow from the city towards the bridgeheads (here is a paradox: the 1st Belorussian Front could not help the dying Poles for a month and a half due to "troop fatigue", and now it turns out that these are Poles did not help the Belorussian Front!) But the main snag is not in this, but in the fact that the leadership of the AK "stubbornly took a hostile position towards the Polish democratic forces and the Soviet Union" (History of the Second World War, vol. 9, p. 72).

Stalin and Bierut are the true defenders of democracy!

On October 2, Bur-Komarovsky signed the act of surrender, and the fighting in the city ceased. During the Warsaw uprising, 225,000 rebels and civilians died. The Germans who survived were evicted from the city, a significant part were thrown into concentration camps. Warsaw itself was almost completely destroyed. The Craiova Army received a blow from which it never recovered, which greatly facilitated Stalin's work on the further "democratization" of Poland. The hopes of the London government were dispelled like smoke, the Soviet side suggested that Mikolajczyk apply to the National Liberation Committee on all issues.

While Warsaw was assisted by one 3rd infantry division, very close by 14 rifle divisions of the 47th and 70th armies, day after day, stubbornly, bloodily and unsuccessfully attacked the enemy's Modlin bridgehead, which, moreover, they did not need. Even the battered Rokossovsky was impressed by this massacre:

"The enemy on the entire front went over to the defensive (the events take place at the end of October). But we were not allowed to go on the defensive in the area north of Warsaw on

in the Modlin direction, Marshal Zhukov, a representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, who was with us at that time ... The terrain formed a triangle located in a lowland, which could only be attacked from its wide part, i.e. in the forehead ... From the high

banks, the enemy perfectly looked through everything that was happening on the outskirts of the positions equipped by his troops. The strongest side of his defense was that all approaches were shot through by cross artillery fire from positions located beyond the Narew and Vistula rivers, and in addition, by artillery located in the Modlin fortress at the confluence of these rivers. The troops suffered heavy losses, a large amount of ammunition was expended, and we could not dislodge the enemy from this triangle. My repeated reports to Zhukov about the inexpediency of this offensive and the arguments that if the enemy leaves this triangle, then we will not occupy it anyway, since he will shoot us with his fire from very advantageous positions, had no effect. From him I received one answer, that he could not leave for Moscow with the knowledge that the enemy was holding a foothold on the banks of the Vistula and Narew. In order to decide to stop this senseless offensive against the wishes of the Headquarters representative, I decided to personally study the situation directly on the ground ... What I had to see and experience in response to our fire from the enemy cannot be forgotten ... It was a real hurricane, fire was fired by guns of various calibers, up to heavy ones: serfs, ordinary and six-barreled mortars ... What an attack there!

Rokossovsky stayed "on the ground" for one day, and the troops went on it in senseless attacks for almost two months! So, literally to the last letter and the last soldier, Comrade Zhukov, following the orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Hence the rhetorical question: did Stalin order his deputy to storm Warsaw?

In October, the Germans, with counterattacks, massively using tanks, sought to eliminate the bridgeheads at all costs. Stalin ordered to keep them at all costs. Retained. The army of General Gusev continued to cover the Modlin triangle with corpses. Fighting here continued until November 2.

The losses of the two fronts in the battle for the Narew line amounted to almost 160,000 people killed and wounded.

"As a result of the fifth strike, Soviet troops completely liberated the Byelorussian SSR, a significant part of Poland and most of the Lithuanian SSR. Soviet troops, advancing westward up to 500-600 km, reached the Vistula and Neman, came directly to the borders of Germany. The defeat of the German defense in Belarus made it possible to organize new crushing blows: the 6th Stalinist blow in Western Ukraine and the 8th Stalinist blow in the Baltic states, forcing the enemy to rush from one sector of the front to another and spend their strategic reserves in parts.

The Air Force provided effective support to the ground forces in breaking through the defenses, encircling and liquidating large groupings of German troops, crossing rivers and pursuing the enemy, making over 153,000 combat sorties. This made it possible to firmly maintain air supremacy and to concentrate the main forces of the air armies on supporting the shock groupings of the fronts, disorganizing the planned withdrawal of the enemy, and destroying large groupings of his troops. The rapid advance of the ground troops and the liberation of Bobruisk and Pinsk were facilitated by the actions of the Dnieper military flotilla.

Important for ensuring successful combat operations of troops during

The operation had a well-organized interaction between fronts, branches of the Armed Forces and combat arms. Soviet troops delivered coordinated strikes with the aim of simultaneously breaking through the enemy defenses on a wide front, surrounded large enemy groupings and pursued his retreating units to a great depth. IN

operations on a large scale, the interaction of the Soviet Army with the partisans was carried out.

The Soviet troops showed the high art of rapid frontal and parallel pursuit of the retreating enemy, which was carried out at a high pace and to great depths. The command of the fronts and armies made extensive use of mobile formations and units to reach the rear of the retreating enemy, which made it impossible for the enemy command to take up defenses in advance on previously prepared lines.

The tactics of the Soviet troops were distinguished by the extensive use of advanced battalions, high combat skills and well-organized interaction of all branches of the armed forces, their skillful actions during the assault on cities, forcing water barriers, and overcoming wooded and swampy terrain.

"Bagration" is one of the most beautiful and effective operations of the Red Army. Unfortunately, in Europe, the Soviet command again returned to the strategy of frontal strikes.

According to Hitler's adjutant, Colonel Niklaus von Belov, it was after the crushing defeat of Army Group Center in Belarus that the Fuhrer stopped believing in victory.

SIXTH STALIN IMPACT

"... was carried out by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front in July-August in the region of Western Ukraine, where the enemy grouping in the Lvov direction was defeated and part of it, having suffered huge losses, was thrown back over the San and Vistula rivers."

By mid-July, the successful actions of the Soviet troops in Belarus created favorable conditions for Marshal Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front to go on the offensive in the Lvov-Sandomierz direction.

LVIV OPERATION

On the 440-kilometer line, which ran west of Kovel, Ternopil and Kolomyia, the army group "Northern Ukraine" under the command of General Josef Harpe took up the defense with most of its forces. It included the 1st and 4th German tank, as well as the 1st Hungarian armies, a total of 34 infantry, five tank, one motorized division and two infantry brigades. They numbered over 600 thousand people, 6300 guns and mortars, 900 tanks and assault guns. At the same time, the left-flank formations of the 4th Panzer Army opposed the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. 700 aircraft were involved from the 4th Air Fleet. With these forces, the German command expected to keep the part of the territory of Ukraine that remained in its hands, as well as to cover the directions that led to the southern regions of Poland and Czechoslovakia, which had a large economic and

strategic importance.

Having suffered a defeat in the Right-Bank Ukraine and expecting new Stalinist strikes, the Germans persistently strengthened and improved the defense, especially in the Lvov direction. They created three defensive lines here, but by the beginning of the offensive they had only time to fully prepare only two, which formed a tactical defense zone. Five armored, one motorized and three infantry divisions made up

reserve commanders of armies and army groups.

The 1st Ukrainian Front included the 1st, 3rd and 5th guards, 13th, 18th, 38th and 60th combined arms armies, 1st and 3rd guards and 4th tank, 2nd air army,

4th Guards, 25th and 31st Tank, 1st and 6th Guards Cavalry Corps,
A

also the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps. In total, the front had 80 rifle and cavalry divisions, 3 mechanized and 7 tank corps, 4 separate tank brigades, 18 separate tank and 24 self-propelled artillery regiments - about 1,200,000 people, 15,500 guns and mortars, 1,056 rocket artillery installations, 1,667 tanks and 529 self-propelled units, over 3246 aircraft. It was the largest front-line association of all so far created.

In connection with the upcoming operation, the Supreme Commander held a special meeting on June 23, 1944, at which Konev reported his decision to deliver two strikes: on the Lvov and Rava-Russian directions. This made it possible to dissect the Northern Ukraine Army Group, encircle and destroy the enemy in the Brody region. The plan aroused objections from Stalin, who considered the dispersal of forces in two directions inappropriate. He recommended inflicting one powerful blow - on Lvov, putting all his strength into it. Konev argued that a strike in one direction would allow the enemy to widely maneuver with the tank and motorized formations he had in reserve and to concentrate all aviation in one place. In addition, the offensive of one strike force in the most fortified sector will lead not to a breakthrough, but to gnaw through the defenses, pushing the enemy from line to line, and will not provide great operational benefits. In the end, the front commander defended his point of view. On June 24, Stalin approved the operation plan proposed by the front, but in parting words he said: "Keep in mind, Konev, the operation must go flawlessly and bring the desired result."

Its goal was to defeat the army group "Northern Ukraine", complete the liberation of Ukraine and transfer the fighting to the territory of Poland. The operation was carried out in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, which were developing an offensive in the Lublin direction. The general plan was to inflict two powerful blows on the right wing and in the center and break through the front in two directions, 60-70 km apart from each other. The first blow was planned to be delivered from the region west of Lutsk in the direction of Sokal, Rava-Russkaya and the second - from the Ternopil region to Lvov with the task of defeating the Lvov group of Germans, capturing Lvov and the Przemysl fortress.

The strike force in the Lutsk direction included the 3rd Guards Army of General V.G. Gordov, 13th Army of General N.P. Pukhov, 1st Guards Tank Army of General M.E. Katukov, a horse-mechanized group, which included the 25th Tank and 1st Guards Cavalry Corps under the overall command of General V.K. Baranov. The offensive of this strike force was supported by four aviation corps of the 2nd Air Army.

The shock "fist" in the Lvov direction included the 60th Army of General P.A. Kurochkin, 38th Army of General K.S. Moskalenko, 3rd Guards Tank Army

Rybalko, Lelyushenko's 4th Tank Army, General S.V. Sokolov as part of the 31st Tank and 6th Guards Cavalry Corps. From the air they were supported by five aviation corps.

Thus, strong strike groupings of troops were created in both directions. In Lutsk, on a breakthrough section 12 km wide, it was planned to concentrate

14 rifle divisions, two tank, mechanized, cavalry corps and two breakthrough artillery divisions - 3250 guns and mortars, 717 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1300 aircraft. In the Lvov direction, on a 14-kilometer section, they were supposed to strike

15 rifle divisions, four tank divisions, two mechanized divisions, a cavalry corps and two breakthrough artillery divisions - 3,775 guns, 1,084 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1,950 aircraft.

On the fifth day of the operation, the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies were to reach the Nemirov-Yavorov line, much to the west of the city, with deep sweeping attacks north and south of Lvov.

On the left wing of the front along the foothills of the Carpathians, the troops of the 1st Guards Army of General A.A. were deployed. Grechko and the 18th Army E.P. Zhuravlev. Using the success of its neighbors, Grechko's army, having created a strike force of five divisions and the 4th Guards Tank Corps, was supposed to go on the offensive, seize a bridgehead on the Dniester in the Galich region, thereby ensuring the actions of troops in the Lvov direction. Zhuravlev's army, which operated south of the Dniester, was tasked with firmly holding the occupied lines and being ready to go on the offensive in the Stanislav direction.

The reserve of the front included the 5th Guards Army of General A.S. Zhadov, who, at the direction of the Headquarters, was transferred from the 2nd Ukrainian Front, and the 47th Rifle Corps.

Having launched an offensive, the strike groups were to defeat the main forces of the opposing enemy, with part of the forces to surround and destroy the German formations in the Brody area with strikes in converging directions. Then they had to, developing success and bypassing Lvov from the northwest and southwest, to capture the city. On the fifth day of the operation, they planned to reach the line of Grubeshuv, Tomaszow, Nemirov, Yavorov, Rozdal. At the second stage, the main efforts were transferred to the Sandomierz direction in order to force the Vistula and create a large operational foothold in the Sandomierz area. In reality, the implementation of the encirclement was associated with considerable difficulties, since the front did not have any bends on the line of deployment of strike groups.

On July 10, the operation plan was finally approved by the Stavka. At the same time, instructions were given to use tank armies and cavalry-mechanized groups not to break through the defense, but to develop success, and doubts were expressed about the ability of the infantry to maintain the rate of advance of 35 km per day, which was established by Konev.

In order to hide the preparation of the operation, the front headquarters developed an operational camouflage plan, which provided for simulating the concentration of two tank armies and a tank corps on the left wing of the front, in the bands of the 1st Guards and 18th armies. For its implementation on a large scale, false transportation of armored vehicles by rail was used, the areas of unloading of tank formations were imitated, their march to the concentration area was indicated, and open radio broadcasts were conducted. In false areas, a large number of models of tanks, vehicles, guns and other equipment were exhibited. False airfields with mock-ups

aircraft for naturalness were covered by duty units of fighters. A number of settlements were visited by "lodgers" who distributed houses for "arriving headquarters and units".

Despite the strictest camouflage measures, it was not possible to completely deceive the enemy. The Germans were waiting for the advance of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, first of all, in the Lvov direction, where they put up an operational reserve - the 3rd tank corps. They intensified reconnaissance, revealed the location and composition of the combined arms armies, determined the directions of the attacks being prepared, outlined countermeasures, in particular, the withdrawal of troops to the second lane in a significant sector of the front, but Katukov's tank army was not transferred to the area south of Lutsk.

The density of guns and mortars in the breakthrough areas amounted to more than 250 barrels per | | km. The duration of the artillery preparation was planned | hour 40 minutes. For direct support of the infantry, 349 tanks and self-propelled guns were allocated. IN

the period of preparation for the operation of connecting the front "received a significant replenishment of people called up from the regions of the Right-Bank Ukraine." Political workers helped these people "completely free themselves from the consequences of fascist and bourgeois-nationalist propaganda and truly prepare for the performance of military duty." After that, untrained conscripts were almost immediately thrown to the front line, regardless of any losses, and this was the most tried and tested way to free them from the influence of "bourgeois-nationalist propaganda."

The breakthrough had to be carried out in favorable conditions, when the Belorussian fronts successfully pursued the enemy on the outskirts of the Neman and in the upper reaches of the Narew, thereby creating a threat to bypass the left flank of the Northern Ukraine Army Group. The course of the operation "Bagration" gave reason to assume that the Germans might withdraw their troops in depth in front of the right flank or in the entire strip of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which followed.

Indeed, on July 10, Konev became aware of the enemy's intention to withdraw his forces to the second line of defense. The marshal writes in his memoirs that this did not confuse him: "From the experience of previous operations, we took into account that the enemy is always trying to deceive us by withdrawing his forces from the first line of defense to the second in order to save forces during the artillery preparation and disrupt our offensive." Everything is correct, but the commander did not have a plan for this case. As a result, the Germans on the Rava-Russian directions, hiding behind the rearguards of the 291st Infantry Division, managed to retreat with the main forces of the 42nd Army Corps to the second lane, condense battle formations and throw up reserves. True, shooting at an empty place was avoided.

On July 12, Konev decided to conduct reconnaissance in force with the forces of reinforced companies from each division of the first echelon. At 10 p.m., reconnaissance detachments moved forward in both directions of the upcoming strikes. In the zone of the 3rd Guards Army, it was established that at dusk the 88th and 72nd Infantry Divisions began to withdraw from the front line. Directly in front of the breakthrough area, units of the 291st Infantry Division repelled an attack by reconnaissance detachments. During July 13, it was still possible to give orders to move and deploy strike groups in front of the second lane and plan its breakthrough and effective fire damage, but the commander did not do this.

The offensive on the northern flank began on July 13 after a 30-minute artillery preparation by the forward battalions of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies. During the day, the advanced battalions advanced 7-8 km. Finally, at 18:00, after massive artillery and air strikes, the main forces of the first-echelon divisions went on the offensive. They quickly broke the resistance

the enemy, which is not surprising, since two regiments of the 291st Infantry Division held the defense here, and rushed to the second lane, but could not break through it on the move. The main forces of the 42nd German Corps - three infantry divisions - managed to retreat without heavy losses and prepare to repel the attacks. On the direction of attack of the northern grouping, the enemy also pulled up the 16th and 17th tank divisions.

As a result, the first blow fell into the void. Now it was necessary to regroup the troops, which required 12-16 hours, to carry out reconnaissance and prepare a new breakthrough. The front commander decided not to waste time on this. Here it was possible not to save on people, especially on unreliable replenishment. The attack of the second lane began on the morning of July 14 at a density of 90-100 guns, when it was possible to have 200 barrels per kilometer. The artillery that moved behind the troops barely took up positions and did not have time to fire. There was almost no reconnaissance data on the enemy and his firepower on the second line of defense. Therefore, Konev decided not to waste shells: the fire raid lasted only 5

minutes. Naturally, the enemy was weakly suppressed, and the advancing troops met stubborn resistance. A number of counterattacks were undertaken by German tank divisions. To repel them, according to General I.P. Galitsky, "anti-tank" dogs were used:

"The fascist tanks were especially impudently pushing forward. In the reserve of regimental sappers there was a platoon of dogs - tank destroyers of Lieutenant I.N. Zhukov. The commander of the unit, Colonel Pokrovsky, ordered the lieutenant to destroy the "tigers". Zhukov pushed forward the squad of junior sergeant Bocharov, consisting of four guides with dogs. Having let the tanks to a distance of 100 m, the soldiers let the dogs go. Two "tigers" were blown up, the third turned back. The regiment repulsed the counterattack of the Nazis and rushed forward again.

During the day, the Soviet troops failed to achieve success. Only the 76th Rifle Corps of Gordov's army, which was not part of the strike force, was able to find a weak spot in the enemy's defense. The 1st Guards Tank Brigade was brought into action in its zone. Together they advanced to a depth of 8 km. At least even six months ago, the offensive of the 1st Ukrainian Front would have ended there, choking on blood. But now the quantitative advantage over the enemy was colossal, which made it possible to repeat attempt after attempt until the desired result was obtained.

This time it was decided to put the troops in order during the night, move the second echelons of rifle corps into the first line, and on the morning of July 15 conduct powerful artillery preparation and complete the breakthrough of the tactical defense zone. The number of guns and mortars was brought up to 200 barrels per 1 km.

At 0830, the troops of the northern strike force resumed their offensive. The units of the 13th Army were the most successful on this day. Her corps broke through the second line of defense by the end of the day. The success was facilitated by the fact that the main efforts of the army were concentrated on the site of the most battered 291st Infantry Division.

The next day, the 3rd Guards Army also broke through the second lane, creating the conditions for bringing mobile groups into battle. At the same time, Konev changed the initial order of their input, he really wanted to organize a "cauldron" like the Korsun one. First, on July 16, he brought in General Baranov's cavalry-mechanized group. The very next day it was supposed to take control of the Kamenka-Strumilovskaya area, seize a bridgehead on the Western Bug and cut off the enemy's Brod grouping of the escape route to the west. However, the presence of vulnerable cavalry formations in the group made it difficult for her to pass into the operational depth through a narrow gap. This led to the loss of a whole day, necessary for the development of a tactical breakthrough into an operational one.

Only on July 17, in the zone of the 13th Army, Katukov's tank army, which had 416 tanks and self-propelled guns, entered the breakthrough, at a depth of 20 km from the former front line, the operational defense of the Germans was finally broken through and the troops of the right shock group were given freedom for maneuvering operations. Successfully developing the offensive, the tankers crossed the Western Bug on the move and captured the bridgehead in the Dobrichin area, entering the territory of Poland. The next day, the troops of General Gordov crossed the river in the Sokal region. 25th Tank Corps of General F.G. Anikushin, who made up the strike force of the KMG, overtook the infantry battle formations and went to the Western Bug, and on July 18, the formations of the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps captured Derevlyany.

Taking advantage of the success of the mobile troops, rifle formations continued to expand and deepen the breakthrough.

In a more difficult situation, an offensive developed in the Lvov direction. The reconnaissance carried out on July 13 showed that the enemy was exerting a furious

resistance and does not intend to leave the position. Therefore, it was decided to start the operation on July 14. But Konev still had doubts and did not want to waste shells. By analogy with the situation that had developed in the Rava-Russian direction, he believed that here the Germans were about to begin the withdrawal of troops. In the morning, without artillery preparation, only the forward detachments of the divisions went on the attack. They took possession of the first and second trenches by 9 o'clock and could not advance further. There was an awkward pause. Wishing to exert a powerful fire impact on the enemy, the front commander ordered that the first echelons be brought into battle only after air strikes had been delivered. The weather in the first half of the day turned out to be completely non-flying. The armies had to wait for better meteorological conditions.

At 16:00, after artillery preparation, which lasted an hour and a half, and massive air strikes, the main forces of the 60th and 38th armies went on the offensive, with the task of breaking through the enemy's tactical defense zone to a depth of 20 km on the first day. However, the success was insignificant, by the end of the day they managed to advance only 3-7 km, although the two armies, which had 22 rifle divisions, were opposed here by four infantry divisions, and seven out of ten divisions of the Moskalenko army operated on a 6-kilometer sector, storming the defenses of 357 th infantry division.

Although a lot of bombs and shells were thrown, the effectiveness of artillery and aviation preparation was low. Believing in their might, they neglected reconnaissance, and the enemy's fire system turned out to be unsuppressed. Having gathered all the tanks into shock fists, the infantry was given almost nothing for direct support. So, the 38th Army was allocated only 29 tanks and 45 self-propelled guns, which were mostly "used up" in the morning. But the tank army stood behind, waiting for the rifle troops to clear the way for it to operate in the operational depth. The loss of time and pace led to the fact that the Germans accurately determined the direction of their long-awaited strike, managed to regroup their forces and bring up tactical reserves, the presence of which in this area the Soviet command did not suspect.

In order to speed up the breakthrough of the tactical defense zone of the enemy, Konev, on the morning of May 15, in the zone of Kurochkin's army, brought part of the forces of the 3rd Guards Tank Army into battle. Fierce fighting broke out. A particularly tense situation developed with General Moskalenko. The German command, having created a strike force of the 1st and 8th tank divisions, launched a counterattack here from the area of Plugov, Sborov and pushed the formations of the 38th army by 2-4 km. They were forced to stop and repel enemy attacks and left-flank formations of the 60th Army.

In general, it seems that, while preparing the operation and gathering unprecedented forces and means on one front, the enemy was not taken seriously and did not expect much resistance from him. Marshal Moskalenko admits that the counterattack on the flank of his army was a complete surprise: "How could this happen? I believe that the root cause of such a miss was insufficient study of the opposing enemy forces. Both front-line and army reconnaissance groups were unable to fully reveal the composition, grouping and plan of the enemy. Hence the imperfection of the army's plans for an offensive operation. The plan of the 38th army would undoubtedly have been somewhat different if they had more detailed information about the intentions, forces and means of the enemy. In general, they tried so hard to hide their own intentions that there was not enough time to find out the intentions of the enemy.

To rectify the situation, the 2nd Air Army was ordered to "concentrate" on the German tank grouping. As we remember, here our troops supported about 2,000 aircraft. During the day, bombers and attack aircraft of the four air corps made over 1,800 sorties, dropping more than 100 tons of bombs per square kilometer. As a result of air strikes,

artillery of the 38th Army, as well as the tank and mechanized brigades allocated from Lelyushenko's army, the German troops were disorganized, suffered significant losses and sharply reduced their activity. General Mellenthin writes: "On the march, the 8th Panzer Division, moving in long columns, was attacked by Russian aircraft and suffered huge losses. Many tanks and trucks burned down; all hopes of a counterattack collapsed. The enemy's counterattack was repulsed, but the prospect of introducing the 4th Panzer Army into the breakthrough in this sector remained illusory.

The Germans also launched strong counterattacks against the 60th Army. But here, her formations, together with units of the Rybalko army, successfully overcame enemy resistance and, advancing on July 15 to a depth of 18 km, broke through the second line of enemy defenses on a five-kilometer section in the Koltov region, creating the so-called Koltov corridor.

This passage, at the suggestion of General Rybalko, was used on the morning of July 16 to enter the 3rd Guards Tank Army. The army consisted of about 42,000 people, 555 tanks and self-propelled guns, including 42 IS-2 vehicles, 563 guns and mortars, 79 rocket launchers, and 241 armored personnel carriers. A narrow breakthrough zone, impassability, peaty soils and heavy rains forced all this mass of troops and equipment to move along one route in a continuous continuous many-kilometer column under enemy artillery and mortar fire. The decision was risky, since the passage through which the largest tank formation was to be pushed was three to four times narrower than provided for by the charters and established practice, but Konev, although not without hesitation, accepted it. According to the plan, the strike force should have already been at Lvov, but it has not yet moved. To support the army from the air, the front commander allocated six aviation corps; during the whole daylight hours, Soviet fighters hung over the corridor.

In an effort to eliminate the Koltov corridor and prevent the penetration of tank troops into the operational depth, the Germans resumed counterattacks from the north with units of the 13th Army Corps and from the south with two tank divisions. The situation was extremely tense. However, Rybalko's tanks managed to push forward. By the end of July 18, they overcame the rear line of the enemy, crossed the Pelvev River along two built bridges and went to the Dzedziluv, Krasnoe area, and parts of the 9th mechanized corps reached Derevlyan, where they connected with the cavalry mechanized group of General Baranov, completing the encirclement of the enemy's Brod group.

On the morning of July 17, through the Koltov corridor, since no success was achieved in the zone of the 38th Army, the 4th Panzer Army began to enter the gap. She had to, bypassing Lvov from the south, develop an offensive against Gorodok. However, during July 17-18, due to the strong opposition of the German troops on the flanks, it was not possible to completely introduce the army into the breakthrough. Half of its forces, together with the troops of the 60th Army, were forced to repel enemy counterattacks south of Zolochiv. Nevertheless, Konev ordered General Lelyushenko to continue the task in cash.

forces.

In order to quickly release the 13th and 60th armies for the development of an offensive in the Lviv-Przemysl direction, the front commander additionally attracted the 4th Guards and 31st Tank Corps, aviation and artillery corps of the RGK to destroy the Brod group.

In order to expand the breakthrough towards the left wing of the front, the 1st Guards Army went on the offensive. Using the breakthrough sector of the 38th Army, on the morning of July 16, she struck in the direction of Berezhany, defeated the enemy troops here and thereby forced the German command to roll up the defense in front of the army to the south. Moskalenko's army, repelling counterattacks from the south, advanced 8-14 km.

Thus, during the six days of the offensive, from 13 to 18 July, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, despite the exceptionally stubborn resistance of the enemy, achieved a major operational success. In both directions, they broke through the enemy defenses on a front of 200 km, advanced to a depth of 50-80 km, crossed the Western Bug and surrounded the German group in the Brody area.

Simultaneously with the fighting to eliminate the Brodsky grouping, the troops of the front continued to develop an offensive to the west. It developed especially successfully on the right wing. On July 19, the 1st Guards Tank Army broke the enemy's resistance on the Western Bug and began the pursuit. In connection with the rapid advance of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies in divergent directions, a large gap formed between them. Therefore, the horse-mechanized group of Sokolov received the task from the Rava-Russkaya area to deliver a flank attack to the north-west, to Frampol. By going behind enemy lines, she was supposed to promote the advance of Gordov's army, establish interaction with the formations of the 1st Belorussian Front, further force the Vistula on the move and seize bridgeheads.

By this time, an extremely favorable situation had developed in the Lvov direction. Lviv was one of the most important strategic objects and a major enemy communications center, which largely determined the stability of its defense. In this regard, the city itself and the surrounding area were heavily fortified. The nearest villages were turned into strongholds with a developed system of fortifications and engineering barriers. But the German forces in the Lvov region were not enough, they had already used up operational reserves. The troops of the 3rd Guards Tank Army and the 13th Army were 20-30 km from the city. The 4th Panzer Army, with its 10th Guards Tank Corps, entered the Olshanytsya area, 30 km east of Lvov. From the north, the city was covered by Baranov's cavalry mechanized group. In this situation, on the night of July 19, Konev ordered General Rybalko to take a detour from the north and northwest, and General Lelyushenko from the south to capture Lvov no later than the morning of July 20. However, this was not possible. As Lelyushenko rightly noted in his memoirs, who had to immediately turn his troops 90 degrees to the north: "It was a new task - not to bypass Lvov, but to take it." And take purely tank formations.

Baranov's horse-mechanized group, instead of a swift rush to the west, got involved in frontal attacks beyond Zholkev and did not complete the task assigned to it. Konev hurried: "The trampling of the group for the second day before the weak

enemy is a crime. But even on July 21, Baranov's corps fought head-on against Zholkev.

The 4th Panzer Army fought unsuccessful battles with one corps on the southeastern approaches to Lvov. The rest of her forces were tied up with the defense of the Koltov corridor and repulsing the counterattack of the 48th Panzer Corps, which, by the way, did not have a single panzer division. Having met stubborn resistance near the city, the army was unable to continue the offensive, its forces were scattered in four regions.

General Rybalko, seeking to take Lvov as soon as possible, did not philosophize slyly and, instead of a detour, attacked the German positions along the shortest distance along the Krasnoe-Lvov road. The enthusiasm of the army commander was spurred on by the fact that on the way to the city the army did not meet any significant resistance. As a result, the tanks ran into a peat bog and were drawn into protracted battles on an extremely uncomfortable terrain.

"At first glance, the field is like a field," recalls General V.S. Arkhipov - in reality - a weak peat bog, treacherously covered with thick green grass. The caterpillars of the tanks broke through deep black ruts, which were immediately filled with water ... In such a situation, on a swampy terrain that excluded any possibility of maneuver, our units launched several attacks. They were unsuccessful.

I had to report to General Novikov that the tanks were getting stuck, we were suffering losses, but there was no advance ... For more than two days we fought almost on the spot ... we all felt very keenly that the tank raid launched brilliantly, despite the lack of roads and bad weather in at a good pace and with minimal losses, suddenly stalled.

Due to heavy rains that washed out the roads, the rear fell behind and did not have time to deliver ammunition and fuel in a timely manner. Despite Konev's instructions to make a detour, Rybalko "got carried away." It was 7-8 km to the city, and it was well visible from the observation posts. The corps commanders reported that a little more pressure was needed, and the brigades would break into Lvov. In some areas, the tankers ran into the enemy defenses with wedges, but each time the Germans threw fresh forces to the breakthrough area and stabilized

position.

The main forces of the 60th Army and the left-flank divisions of the 13th Army, with two tank corps attached to them, were pinned down by the enemy's encircled Brodsky grouping.

The course of the operation was significantly out of schedule, the Germans, imposing protracted battles, slowed down the pace of advance of the Soviet troops.

On July 20, General Katukov received an order to turn the 1st Guards Tank Army to the southwest and rapidly develop an offensive towards the San River in order to cross it and intercept the enemy's retreat to the west.

During this time, the Germans managed to transfer parts of three divisions to the Lvov region from the Stanislavsky direction and strengthen their defenses here. The situation that had developed near Lvov by the end of July 21 no longer allowed taking the city on the move with the forces of only tank armies.

Fearing a flank attack by the Soviet troops from Przemyśl to the south, the German command began to withdraw parts of the 24th tank and 59th army corps from the Stanislav direction to the west. The troops of the 38th and right flank of the 1st Guards Armies, knocking down the rearguards, began the pursuit. In order to cut off the escape route for the Germans, General M.L. Lelyushenko was instructed to immediately deliver a swift blow south of Lvov to Sambir, defeat the enemy's rear and not

allow the departure of the Lvov-Stanislav group.

By the end of July 21, the offensive of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front unfolded in a 400-kilometer strip from Hrubeshuv to the Dniester. Formations of the 1st Guards Tank, 13th Armies and Baranov's cavalry-mechanized group, bypassing Lvov from the northwest, developed an offensive towards the San River.

By July 22, having repulsed numerous counterattacks on the outer and inner fronts of the encirclement, the Soviet troops divided the encircled group into two parts and completely liquidated it. According to Konev, there were eight German divisions in the "cauldron". Later sources indicated more modestly: "up to eight", General of the Army Lelyushenko - "up to six enemy divisions." This DO in quantitative terms means about five divisions - the 340th and 361st infantry, partly the 454th security, corps group "C", which was counted as three divisions and the 14th SS infantry division "Galicia". All of them were defeated, and the first two were almost completely destroyed. Moreover, the "Galicians" were not taken prisoner. According to the report of the commander of the front, which became the official "historical" source, the Germans lost more than 38,000 people killed and 17,000 prisoners. If the prisoners had to be counted, then the number of "killed" in Soviet sources can never be considered reliable. By the way, Army General D.D. Lelyushenko recalls that at dawn on July 20, the "surrounded" Germans overcame the Koltov corridor west of Zolochiv and "dense battle formations" broke into the area where the headquarters and rear of the 4th Panzer

army, the fighting here lasted two days and, of course, "only a few managed to break into the Carpathians." Well, for example, three thousand Ukrainian SS men.

The chroniclers of the battle path of the 3rd Guards Tank Army report in passing that the Germans lost 25,000 people killed and captured in the entire Lvov-Sandomierz operation.

Having eliminated the "cauldron" near Brody, the front command concentrated the main forces to defeat the Lvov group. The front headquarters decided, using the success of the armies of Katukov and Pukhov, to accelerate the bypass of Lvov by Rybalko's tank army from the northwest and west, the 4th tank army from the south, and strike from the east with the troops of the 60th army. The 38th Army was to continue a vigorous offensive from Przemyśl to the southern outskirts of Lvov.

Konev reports that the unintelligent Rybalko finally "understood the meaning of my demand and proceeded to regroup." Leaving the 56th Guards Brigade to simulate activity in the peat bogs, the 3rd Guards Tank Army withdrew from the battle from July 22 to 24, made a 125-kilometer march maneuver, on good roads, knocking down barriers, with the main forces bypassed Lvov from the north and west and launched an offensive in two divergent directions: to Lvov - from the west by the forces of the 7th Guards Tank Corps of General S.A. Ivanov and the 6th Guards Tank Corps of General V.V. Novikov, reinforced by the 91st tank brigade, to Przemyśl - from the east. This maneuver was extremely important for the front. The exit of tank troops to the Yavorov region and southeast of it cut off the communications of the Lvov enemy grouping, which led to Yaroslavl and Przemyśl.

While Rybalko's tankers were making a march to the Yavorov area, the 4th Panzer Army stormed the city from the south. Konev, describing the very protracted battles for Lvov, blames everything on the stupidity of his subordinates: I, they say, ordered "to go around Lvov deeper from the west." However, he immediately cites his own directives sent by Lelyushenko. On July 19, the army commander receives an order to "take Lvov", two days later

- without getting involved in protracted battles, again "rapidly go to Gorodok", and on July 22 - "immediately deliver a swift blow to Sambir with the main forces of the army" and take it by the end of July 25. After that, making a complete fool out of the commander, Konev reports that "General D.D. Lelyushenko, having the task of advancing on Sambir, in order to prevent the enemy from retreating to the south-west, decided "on the way" to break into Lvov with part of his forces. Meanwhile, by the end of July 22, the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army were fighting on the southern outskirts of Lvov, and its 10th Ural Guards Tank Corps "on the way" broke into the city, where it was cut off by the Germans.

Katukov's army, having fought 120 km, on that day advanced to San to the north and south of Yaroslav, breaking away from the rifle formations of the 13th army by 50 km. On the night of July 23, tankers crossed the river with small forces and captured the bridgehead. However, further progress stalled, the Germans managed to draw the Soviet troops on the San River into protracted battles. German aviation began to show high activity, striking mainly at crossings. Only a day later, the 1st Guards Tank Army crossed the San north and south of Yaroslav. The 25th Panzer Corps and the troops of General Pukhov also came here. The exit of large tank forces on the left bank of the San, deep behind enemy lines, had a great influence on the course of the struggle for Lvov.

On July 24, a concentric offensive was launched against Lvov. Troops of the 60th Army and the 4th Guards Tank Corps advanced from the east and northeast. Ural Tank Corps of General E.E. Belova led street fights. To the west of the city, the 7th Guards Tank Corps of Rybalko's army entered the Gorodok area. However, despite Konev's order to capture Lvov by evening, the battle for him continued.

some more days. To avoid complete encirclement, on the evening of July 25, the German command began to withdraw its troops from Lvov to Sambir. On the morning of July 27, with the joint efforts of the troops of the 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies, the 60th and 38th Armies, with the support of front-line aviation and long-range aviation, completed the liberation of Lvov.

The city was defended by the 168th and 68th infantry and 101st mountain rifle divisions.

Almost simultaneously, units of the 3rd and 1st Guards Tank Armies took Przemyśl and Yaroslav by night assault. The fortified city of Przemyśl was defended by a garrison of up to 3000 people, with assault guns and two armored trains. From the north and east, Przemyśl was covered by the San and Vyara rivers, around the city there was a ring of 15 old forts and 25 resistance nodes with pillboxes built in 1939-1941. However, the Germans did not prepare fortifications for defense and surrendered them without a fight. On the night of July 27, having surrounded Przemyśl, units of the 6th Guards, 11th Guards, 25th Tank Corps and the 287th Rifle Division of the 13th Army broke into the city and cleared it of the enemy by noon the next day.

True, Lelyushenko's army, having been drawn into the battles for Lvov, did not solve the problem of reaching Sambir.

Stubborn fighting also took place on the left wing of the front. Making extensive use of the conditions of the mountainous terrain favorable for defense, the German command sought to keep in its hands the communications leading from Lvov and Stanislav through the Carpathians to Czechoslovakia and Hungary. But with the transfer of units to the Lvov direction, the defense here turned out to be weakened. In addition, the exit of tank armies to Lvov created a threat to the flank and rear of the group operating northeast of Stanislav. The German command was forced to hastily withdraw troops from here to the west.

The 1st Guards Army, pursuing the enemy, on July 24, on the move and in a number of sectors, crossed the Rotten Lipa River without a fight and liberated the city of Galich.

On July 23, the 18th army of General Zhuravlev went on the offensive, which included ten divisions and reinforcements, in which there were 77,289 soldiers and officers, 1416 guns, 209 RS installations, 34 self-propelled guns. The 1st Hungarian army of General Miklós operated in its offensive zone - 75,000 people, 600 guns and mortars, 159 tanks and assault guns. To increase resistance, the Hungarian army corps included German infantry divisions, but it was these divisions that General Harpe had to throw in the defense of Lvov. Concentrating all efforts on a 4-kilometer sector on its left flank, Zhuravlev's army on the first day broke through the defenses of the 16th Hungarian Infantry Division and launched an offensive in the general direction of the Valley. The Hungarians fought hard, systematically organizing counterattacks. Within three days, Zhuravlev's troops advanced 30 km, reached the line of Delyagin, Otynya and started fighting for passes in the foothills of the Carpathians in the Dora region, bypassing the enemy's Stanislav grouping from

south.

Parts of the 1st Guards Army, developing success, occupied Stanislav on July 27.

On the right wing of the front, the offensive towards the Vistula continued. By the end of July 27, the troops of the 3rd Guards Army and Sokolov's cavalry-mechanized group were fighting on the Vilkolaz, Krasnik line; left-flank formations went to the San River.

The defeat of the main forces of the Army Group "Northern Ukraine" and the liberation of Lvov and Stanislav ended the first stage of the strategic operation. Army Group "Northern Ukraine" was divided into two parts: the remnants of the 4th Panzer Army of General Nering retreated beyond the Vistula, the troops of the 1st Panzer Army of General Raus and the 1st

the Hungarian army of General Miklos rolled back to the Carpathians. During the offensive, Soviet troops advanced to a depth of 200 km in a 400 km strip. To the north of the army of the 1st Belorussian Front, by this time the Polish cities of Lublin and Demblin had been liberated and were approaching the Vistula.

A favorable situation developed for the rapid advance of the armies of the right wing to the Vistula and Sandomierz, as well as for the development of success by the armies of the left wing in the direction of Drohobych and the defeat of enemy troops in the foothills of the Carpathians.

To recreate the defense front on the Vistula, the German command began to transfer here the command of the 17th Army, the 23rd and 24th Panzer Divisions from the Southern Ukraine Army Group, two infantry divisions and the command of the 24th Panzer Corps from other sectors of the front, two divisions and individual units from Germany.

Considering the situation, on July 28, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command demanded that the front command concentrate efforts on the right wing and, in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front, develop an offensive in the western direction, prevent the enemy from taking up defenses on the Vistula, force it on the move and seize bridgeheads in the Sandomierz area. In the future, advance in the general direction towards Czestochowa and Krakow.

The troops of the left wing of the front were to prevent the exit of German units from the Stanislav group to the Vistula, to capture the Drohobych region and at the same time to occupy the passes through the Carpathians. To this end, the 60th Army developed an offensive against Debica, the 38th, in cooperation with Baranov's group, against Krosno. The 4th Panzer Army was tasked with a forced march to the Sambir area by the morning of July 28, from where, with a swift blow, by the end of the day, capture Drohobych and Borislav, in order to defeat the enemy and prevent him from withdrawing

to the northwest, across the river San. However, due to increased resistance on the Dniester, Lelyushenko's army was unable to complete the task. The 168th Infantry and units of the 8th Panzer Division, which retreated from Lvov, stopped the corps of the 4th Panzer Army, preventing them from reaching the Drohobych-Borislavsky oil-bearing region. Having failed to complete the assigned task, our commander habitually announces that his army "has pinned down a large enemy grouping in this area." But very soon the divisions from this grouping ended up in the Sandomierz area.

The troops of General Grechko in three days from July 28 to 30 were able to advance 8-15 km and fought at the Rozdol-Zhuravno line. By July 30, the main forces of Zhuravlev's 18th Army had captured the Dolina railway station, cutting off the highway leading through the Carpathians to the Hungarian Plain.

The German command of the stubborn defense on the Dniester and counterattacks sought to withdraw parts of the Lvov and Stanislav groups across the San River along the most convenient remaining path through Drohobych, Sambir, Sanok. The Germans fought hard. Within five days, from July 31 to August 4, especially fierce battles unfolded in the area of the Valley, Vygoda. To ensure the withdrawal of parts of their 1st Panzer Army and maintain communications leading to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the Germans launched counterattacks with up to five divisions, including the 8th German and 2nd Hungarian Panzer.

The 1st Guards, in cooperation with the 38th Army, continued the offensive and on August 5 captured the important road junction of the city of Stryi. The troops of the 18th Army, having broken the resistance of the enemy, crossed the Svitsa River. Moskalenko's army took Sanok.

Since the actions of the 1st Ukrainian Front developed along two diverging directions, this made command and control much more difficult. In addition, the offensive in the Carpathians required special training, special methods of combat operations and control methods. In this regard, the Headquarters considered it expedient to create a new front-line administration aimed at overcoming the Carpathians with the subsequent development of the offensive on Uzhgorod, Mukachevo and access to

Hungarian lowland.

On August 5, the 4th Ukrainian Front was recreated under the command of a proven specialist in military operations in the mountains, General I.E. Petrov, who had to be recalled from the sanatorium for such an occasion. Stalinist humor is peculiar: Lev Zakharovich Mekhlis was appointed a member of the Military Council. A little later, Georgy Fedorovich Zakharov also showed up here, he became Petrov's deputy. The front included the 1st Guards and 18th combined arms, 8th air armies, as well as tank, artillery and other units.

Continuing to advance, these armies captured Drohobych on August 6, and the next day they took Borislav and Sambir. Further progress stalled. Attempts by the Soviet troops to capture the passes across the Carpathian Range on the move were not successful, and the fighting here took on a protracted character. On August 15, the Headquarters ordered the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front to go on the defensive and prepare for a new operation within two weeks.

BANDEROVSHINA

With the departure of the Wehrmacht, the war in Ukraine did not end.

As soon as they entered the Right Bank, the Soviet soldiers saw with surprise and resentment

that one has to fight not only with the Germans, but also with the liberated Ukrainians. The first clashes between the Red Army and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army began already in the Left-Bank Ukraine. In the western lands, their number has increased dramatically.

In 1941-1944, the UPA fought the Germans, detachments of the Polish Home Army and Soviet partisans. The program settings of Ukrainian nationalists to create an independent Ukrainian state inevitably led to a confrontation with the Soviet troops. The Red Army, in turn, could not put up with the fact that anti-Soviet armed detachments were actively operating in its rear, attacking its units.

Active anti-insurgent actions began shortly after General Vatutin was mortally wounded. In March 1944, the 1st Ukrainian Front allocated a cavalry division for these purposes, reinforced with 20 armored vehicles and 8 tanks. Since March, specially trained troops with experience in punitive operations have also appeared on Western Ukrainian lands. Since that time, the practice of conducting Chekist-army operations began, in which, together with the NKVD units, combat units of the Ukrainian fronts actively participated. In the course of such operations in April-May, Bandera detachments were destroyed in the northern regions of the Ternopil region. After the stabilization of the front line, the struggle in the zone saturated with Soviet troops had no prospects. During this period, the command of the UPA gave the order not to get involved in battles, to save and accumulate forces, to intensify ideological work with the Ukrainian contingent in the Red Army. The negative influence of the underground on the morale and psychological state of the personnel worried the Soviet command much more than sabotage actions.

Inspired by successful operations to deport the population of the Caucasus and the Crimean peninsula, Stalin decided that the Ukrainian people also deserved "punishment." I must say that at first the Leader tried to show humanity and get by with the usual "procedures". On January 7, 1944, an order was issued by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, according to which "all identified accomplices on the territory of Ukraine should be arrested with confiscation of property and sent to the Chernogorsk special camp (Krasnoyarsk Territory)". In connection with the entry of the Red Army into the Western Ukrainian lands in March of the same year, a new document was born in the bowels of the same department, which said: "Families, which include

there are OUN members who are in an illegal position, as well as families of convicted OUN members to be registered and evicted to the rear areas of the USSR. Then N.S. Khrushchev made a proposal to resettle the families of active members of the Ukrainian underground. As early as April, General Serov reported that 2,000 families had been prepared for resettlement. They were sent to the Krasnoyarsk Territory, mostly to mining enterprises in the Norilsk region. By this time, Stalin decided not to waste time on trifles. On June 22, 1944, order No. 0078/42 appeared:

"... Recently in Ukraine, especially in Kyiv, Poltava, Vinnitsa, Rivne and other regions, there has been a clearly hostile mood of the Ukrainian population against the Red Army and local organs of Soviet power. In some districts and regions, the Ukrainian population hostilely resists the implementation of the measures of the party and government to restore collective farms and hand over grain for the needs of the Red Army, bread is buried in pits. In many areas, hostile Ukrainian elements, mostly from persons hiding from mobilization into the Red Army, organized "green" gangs in the forests, which not only blow up military trains, but also attack small military units, and also kill local authorities. Individual Red Army soldiers and commanders, having fallen under the influence of a semi-fascist

Ukrainian population and mobilized Ukrainians from the liberated regions of Ukraine began to decompose and go over to the side of the enemy. From the foregoing, it is clear that the Ukrainian population has taken the path of obvious sabotage of the Red Army and Soviet power and is striving for the return of the German occupiers. Therefore, in order to eliminate and control the mobilized Red Army soldiers and commanders of the liberated regions of Ukraine

I ORDER:

1. Send all Ukrainians who lived under the rule of the German occupiers to remote lands of the USSR.
2. Eviction to produce:
 - a) primarily Ukrainians who worked and served with the Germans;
 - 6) secondly, expel all other Ukrainians who are familiar with life during the German occupation;
 - c) to begin eviction after the harvest is harvested and handed over to the state for the needs of the Red Army;
- 2) the eviction should be carried out only at night and suddenly, so as not to allow one to escape and not to let the members of his family who are in the Red Army know.
3. Establish the following control over the Red Army soldiers and commanders from the occupied regions ... "

The authenticity of this document was repeatedly questioned immediately after its publication. However, the former People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, General V.S. Ryzanov, in conversations with Felix Chuev, confirmed that such an order was and at first was actively implemented: "This order was brought to me from Moscow by one of the deputies of the people's commissar of internal affairs. And it was said that for active work against the Red Army on the part of the OUN, for the performance of "militants", for the hostile attitude towards the Russian people, Comrade Stalin ordered all Ukrainians to be evicted to a famous mother, and more specifically, to Siberia ... My fellows filled several echelons. But then this order suddenly stopped. This, so to speak, deportation was carried out until 1952. During this period, according to Ukrainian data, from the regions of Western Ukraine only

felling and "communist construction" about 200 thousand families were evicted, which is approximately 800 thousand people.

With the completion of the Lvov operation in Ukraine, the period of German occupation ended. The main forces of the Red Army went to the west. In the fall of 1944, the UPA adopted a political declaration stating: "We are for the complete liberation of the Ukrainian people from the Moscow-Bolshevik and German yoke, for the creation of an Independent Societal Power without lords, landowners, capitalists, without Bolshevik commissars, NKVDists and party parasites."

War has been declared. In it, the UPA was initially doomed to defeat, as it could not overcome the mighty totalitarian system alone.

The Soviet government immediately made it clear that she was back in earnest and for a long time. Soon the echelons again reached Siberia and the Far East with nationalists and

accomplices of the invaders. Everyone who had even the slightest relation to the OUN or the UPA, worked in the bodies of the German administration, was subjected to repressions and arrests, was suspected of "nationalism". In order to reduce the insurgent "base", mass mobilization into the army was carried out. About 700 thousand people were supposed to appear at the recruiting stations. However, many of them joined the ranks of the rebels. In Galicia alone, 150,000 conscripts did not show up at the assembly points. The mobilization of the male population in the regions of Western Ukraine acquired the character of a "hunt for people". The military units cordoned off the villages, carried out mass raids, then escorted the "conscripts" to special camps.

Fulfilling Stalin's order to liquidate the nationalist movement before the end of the war, the government of the Ukrainian SSR and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs by the end of 1944 involved about 200 thousand soldiers of internal troops, partisan fighters (in particular, Kovpakists) and punitive detachments to fight the UPA. From December 1944 to June 1945, three large-scale anti-insurgency operations were carried out with the help of several divisions, supported by artillery, tanks and aircraft. In January 1945, the head of government and secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party N.S. visited Western Ukraine. Khrushchev. He held several meetings in Lvov with party and Soviet activists, as well as with the leaders of law enforcement agencies, at which he demanded the most drastic measures to be taken: publicly hang captured rebels, take hostages, and repress the families of members of "gangster formations."

Implementing the instructions of Moscow and Kyiv, the internal affairs and state security agencies unleashed mass terror in Western Ukrainian lands. The report of General Ryznyak indicated that during 1944-1945 40,000 operations were carried out, during which 103,000 were killed and 125,000 rebels were detained, 83,000 people were identified who evaded conscription into the army. Since the number of UPA fighters never exceeded 80 thousand, a significant part of those arrested and killed were civilians of the region, who, however, having experienced the charms of socialism in 1939-1941, in the mass majority sympathized with the ideas of the rebels.

The returned authorities behaved no better than the German occupiers and by their actions confirmed the worst fears. Almost 90 percent of senior officials were sent from Russia and Eastern Ukraine, did not know and did not want to know local features, language (the people and their guardians spoke different languages, since the Lviv region was never part of the Russian Empire and the majority of the population did not know Russian), made serious mistakes and abuses. The new leadership at an accelerated pace carried out the "unification" of the region in accordance with the Soviet order. In the spring of 1945, Stalin personally approved a plan to eliminate the Greek Catholic denomination, which united almost 5 million parishioners who were not subordinate to Moscow. Putting the plan into practice, the NKVD arrested and

exiled to hard labor the head of the Uniate Church, 10 bishops, 1400 priests and thousands of believers.

After the end of World War II, Moscow had the opportunity to flood the recalcitrant region with regular troops and organize extensive punitive measures: the Lvov and Carpathian military districts were deployed on the territory of Western Ukraine. From among the former front-line soldiers, mobile groups were formed - on foot, horseback and mechanized. Military units were deployed in all regional centers, strong garrisons were created from internal troops, punitive battalions ("hawks") were recruited from local residents, which included former UPA fighters. A curfew was introduced everywhere, the population was rewritten. The main method of combating the UPA and the OUN underground remained repressions, the physical elimination of the leaders of the resistance, the creation of detachments of provocateurs, and acts of intimidation.

During 1945, the UPA units lost 9,000 killed and nearly 24,000 captured. In the "Great Blockade" of 1946, a contingent of almost 60 thousand people with tanks and other heavy weapons was put up to fight the "bandits", but it was not possible to eliminate the resistance of the UPA-OUN. Despite the loss in manpower, the removal of family members to Siberia, the intensity of resistance to Soviet power did not subside. Only in 1945, in the Lviv region, the rebels carried out about 3,000 armed actions, during which about 5,000 NKVD officers, fighters of punitive battalions, party and Soviet workers were killed. In total, as a result of the retaliatory terror of the Insurgent Army and the underground of Ukrainian nationalists, almost 30 thousand citizens and up to 20 thousand military personnel, policemen, and border guards died.

In the late 40s, the nationalist underground concentrated its forces on propaganda work and sabotage. The conditions of the struggle became more and more difficult, the movement began to decline. On March 5, 1950, UPA commander Roman Shukhevych was killed in a skirmish near Lvov.

Only in the mid-1950s was the armed resistance finally suppressed on the territory of Western Ukraine. Each side of this story has its own truth. Today, in Western Ukrainian cities, all former streets named after Lenin bear the name of Stepan Bandera.

SANDOMIR BRIDGE HAND

The 1st Ukrainian Front, having captured Lvov, the right wing continued its offensive towards the Vistula without a pause. The 3rd Guards Army was given the task of reaching the river and on the night of July 29, crossing it and capturing Sandomierz. In the zone of Gordov's army in the Annopol area, Sokolov's cavalry-mechanized group was supposed to overcome the Vistula. By the morning of July 29, the 13th Army was to reach the Vistula from Sandomierz to the mouth of the Wisloka with the right flank by the morning of July 29, and by the morning of the next day, capture bridgeheads, and capture the city of Rzeszow with formations of the left flank. Katukov's tank army was tasked with striking on the morning of July 29 in the direction of Maidan, Baranow, crossing the Vistula on the move and seizing a bridgehead by the morning of August 1. To the south, Rybalko's army was advancing, with 468 tanks and self-propelled guns in service.

Thus, the main forces of the front were aimed at the Sandomierz direction: three combined arms, two tank armies and a horse-mechanized group. It was also planned to move the 5th Guards Army from the reserve there. The rest of the armies were to continue their offensive to the west and southwest of Lvov in order to press the enemy to the Carpathians, preventing his exit to the northwest of Przemysl.

The 3rd Guards Army, together with the Sokolov group, on July 29 defeated

grouping of the enemy in the An-nopol area and went to the river. The next day, its advanced divisions in separate areas captured three small bridgeheads on the western coast north of Sandomierz. But due to insufficient organization, the crossing of troops and equipment was slow. In the very first days of the fighting on the Vistula, the army lost four crossing parks from enemy bombing, and the engineering troops suffered heavy losses. Due to the unsatisfactory organization of work at the crossing and poor command and control of the troops, the bridgeheads could not be expanded. Moreover, parts of the 76th Rifle Corps were thrown back from the bridgehead to the eastern coast.

The armies of Katukov and Pukhov operated more successfully. The 1st Guards Tank Army made a 90-kilometer march along the front to the northwest, and then

rushed to the Vistula. On the afternoon of July 29, she reached the river on a wide front and immediately began to cross it south of Sandomierz using military and improvised crossing facilities. At the same time, forward units of the 350th Rifle Division of the 13th Army were crossing. By the end of July 30, the main forces of the 24th Rifle Corps, as well as motorized infantry units of the 1st Guards Tank Army, crossed to the bridgehead they had captured. The quick approach of the army and front fleets ensured the crossing of artillery and tanks almost simultaneously with the infantry. Not having enough forces and means, the German command initially could not provide strong opposition. On July 31, in the Baranow area, the troops of the 3rd Guards Tank Army began to cross over to the bridgehead, which received an order without delay to develop an offensive along the Vistula to Krakow.

By the end of August 1, the bridgehead was expanded to 15 km along the front and 10 km in depth. All this had to be done under the strong influence of enemy aircraft, since fighter aircraft had not yet managed to relocate and operated with limited forces. In the 2nd Air Army, in addition, there was a shortage of fuel. To cover the crossings, it was decided to drain part of the fuel from the tanks of bombers and attack aircraft and transfer it to fighters.

The scale of forcing continuously increased. The battles for the expansion of the bridgehead did not stop day or night. German aviation was very active.

In his memoirs, Konev pretends that Stalin hesitantly pushed him to continue the offensive, and the front commander argued and firmly resisted. As evidence, a telephone conversation with the Supreme Commander on August 2 is given:

"I.V. Stalin asked me a question:

- Are you going to move the 3rd Guards Tank Army to Krakow?

I said that the troops of the front were now fighting to expand the bridgehead on the Vistula ... Further, I said that under such conditions I did not consider it expedient to start operating in the Krakow direction and send a tank army to Krakow. The tank army now mainly has the task of expanding and consolidating the Sandomierz bridgehead and repulsing enemy tank attacks.

This satisfied I.V. Stalin."

We have to conclude that on odd days someone else besides the perspicacious Konev commanded the front, since the 6th Guards Tank Corps at that time was rushing at full speed to the ancient Polish capital, having Arkhipov's 53rd brigade in front, which testifies:

"General V.V. Novikov ordered (the conversation is taking place [August]), the full concentration of parts of without waiting the corps, to continue the offensive along the Vistula to the southwest. General direction - Krakow. The brigade moved in the indicated direction, dispersing small enemy garrisons, covered about 40 km in a day, crossed the Nida River, a tributary of the Vistula, and captured the Wislice railway station by morning 3

August. We were already deep behind enemy lines. Neither the Polish population nor the fascists expected to meet us ... the Junkers and Focke-Wulf pilots, flying from the Krakow airfields to the Sandomierz bridgehead, only waved their wings in greeting to our column ... The rapid advance captured everyone us. At short stops, tankers surrounded me: "Comrade Colonel, how much to Krakow?" Major Korobkov - his battalion was the lead one - finished his next report with a short one: "Give Krakow!" In turn, the commander

Corps orders and instructions ended with the phrase: "Only forward!" And suddenly a radiogram - turn back, return to the original area. Note - after a mythical conversation with Stalin and a very real threat on their flanks. It was during these days that the Warsaw Uprising became known and the "tired" armies of Rokossovsky stopped. The Germans took advantage of the break.

In order to repel the onslaught of the 1st Ukrainian Front and prevent the expansion of the bridgehead, the command of the Army Group "Northern Ukraine" ordered the approaching 17th Army of General Schultz to launch a counterattack in the direction of the Maidan, intercept the communications of the Soviet troops advancing in the northwest direction, and in cooperation with the 4th Panzer Army to destroy them. The 4th Panzer Army received the task, defending a sector along the San and Vistula rivers, with a blow from the Sandomierz region, to eliminate the bridgeheads of Soviet troops on its northern flank as soon as possible and to establish interaction with the 17th Army, which attacked from the southwest. The German command sought to restore the defense along the western bank of the Vistula at all costs. However, the forces for this were not yet enough.

In the first half of August, the situation changed - five divisions from the Southern Ukraine Army Group, five infantry divisions from Germany and three infantry divisions from Hungary were transferred to the Sandomierz region. Six brigades of assault guns and a separate battalion of heavy tanks also arrived here. As the reserves approached, the activity of the German troops increased. In early August, fierce battles unfolded on both banks of the Vistula. The enemy tried with counter strikes along the eastern coast to cut off the troops that had crossed to the bridgehead from the main forces of the front and destroy them.

On the morning of August 2, the Germans from the Mielz area, with the forces of the 23rd Panzer and 78th Infantry Divisions, struck along the right bank of the Vistula in the direction of Baranow and broke through to the crossings the next day. To repel them, the 9th Mechanized Corps and all the forces available here, including sapper and pontoon battalions and tanks located at the assembly points of emergency vehicles, were involved. Together they stopped the enemy. Despite this, the situation in the area of the Sandomierz bridgehead by the end of August 3 remained tense. Between the forward units of the 4th Panzer and 17th German armies in the Baranuv area, 12 km remained. Konev realized that a stubborn struggle for the Sandomierz bridgehead was ahead and turned back Novikov's tank corps. The attack on Krakow had to be abandoned. The situation required the transfer of fresh forces to the left bank of the Vistula. It was necessary to defeat the enemy groupings that launched counterattacks and posed the greatest threat to the troops operating on the bridgehead.

The pace of troops crossing the Vistula has significantly decreased. In order to defeat the German grouping, which was striking from the Mielec region, and to further expand the Sandomierz bridgehead, the front commander decided to bring into battle a reserve - the 5th Guards Army. Going on the offensive on August 4, the guards defeated the Mielec grouping of the enemy, threw it back from the crossings south of Baranuv and captured the city of Mielec. On August 6, the 32nd and 34th Guards Rifle Corps reached the western bank of the Vistula along the built bridges. The 33rd corps crossed Wisloka in the Mielec region and developed the offensive in

in the direction of Shchutsin. At the same time, formations of Kurochkin's 60th Army appeared south of the city.

By August 8, the 5th Guards in two corps and the 3rd Guards Tank Army, operating in the center of the bridgehead, reached the line of Shidluv, Stopnipa, Nowy Korczyn and were forced to go on the defensive here. And although the armies did not have contact with the enemy in this direction, an order was given to stop and begin to create a strong defense. Konev already clearly saw that on his flanks

German strike groups, which already numbered six tank divisions (about 400 tanks and assault guns), were concentrated, preparing classic pincers. Under these conditions, a reckless advance into Poland, while Rokossovsky's armies stood on the Vistula, would be suicidal.

Meanwhile, the troops of the 13th and 1st Guards Tank Armies, located on the right flank, resumed the offensive in order to complete the defeat of the main forces of the 4th Tank Army and expand the bridgehead towards Sandomierz and Ostrovets, but due to overwork, a large shortage of people, military equipment and ammunition could not achieve significant success. By August 10, they reached the line of the southern outskirts of Sandomierz, Lagow, Rakow, where they met strong opposition from the enemy reserves brought into battle and suspended the advance.

On the whole, the active actions of the front managed to expand the bridgehead to 60 km along the front and up to 50 km in depth. There were already troops of four armies, including two tank armies.

Intense fighting on the Sandomierz bridgehead continued until the end of August. The German command, seeking to restore the defenses on the Vistula, continued to strengthen the 4th Panzer Army. Konev, in turn, to reinforce only the 5th Guards Army, handed over to General Zhadov the 31st Tank Corps (although only 70 tanks remained in it), the 9th Guards Brigade of Rocket Launchers, the 3rd Breakthrough Artillery Division, in total - about 1000 guns and mortars. Rybalko received several artillery regiments and heavy self-propelled artillery. On the probable directions of enemy counterattacks, intensified defensive work was carried out, tank-dangerous directions were mined.

On the morning of August 11, the enemy, using two armored (3rd and 16th) and 20th motorized divisions of the 3rd Panzer Corps, delivered a cutting blow from the west, from the Khmilnik area, in the direction of Staszow, Osek. In the north, the German 42nd Army Corps sharply intensified its operations. The blow fell at the junction of the 5th Guards and 13th armies. Fierce fighting continued for two days. The German troops succeeded in pushing back the infantry units, advancing 8-10 km and capturing the Szydłów area. However, their attempts to develop a strike in the direction of Baranuv were not successful. Konev quickly transferred Novikov's 6th Guards Tank Corps and the 91st Tank Brigade to the Staszów area. A fierce battle broke out on the ground and in the air, but now the Soviet tankers were in no hurry to rush into oncoming attacks. Yes, and the 32nd Guards Rifle Corps, Lieutenant General A.I., who defended Staszow. Rodimtsev had a Stalingrad hardening.

"It was not often possible for me," recalls Arkhipov, "to see such a mass of tanks and armored personnel carriers following them at the same time. Enemy - line by line - filled all the space visible from the NP from Oglendow and further south. I must say that such a massive attack with steady movement, with the roar of hundreds of engines, from which the ringing is in the ears, exerts strong psychological pressure even on a fired upon soldier. In addition, the soldier must wait until the armored avalanche approaches the direct range of his gun, that is, 800-1000 meters. And we tried to let the tanks even closer, by 400-500 meters, because, firstly, the effectiveness of the fire increased dramatically, and secondly, this

the fire - sudden, powerful, almost point-blank - inflicted not only huge losses on the enemy, but also produced a very strong psychological effect on his tankers ... And something incredible was happening in the air. Dozens of planes, ours and German, were spinning in one huge, several floors high-speed carousel. The battle was in full swing, as they say, from the sun to the ground, and the downed bombers and fighters, leaving long trails, crashed both into the battle formations of the advancing enemy and into our defenses.

The 9th Guards Fighter Aviation Division of the outstanding Soviet ace Colonel A.I. operated over the bridgehead. Pokryshkin, who received his third Hero Star here. True, in order to earn this Star, Alexander Ivanovich did not have to shoot down anything, there were already enough victories: Pokryshkin agreed to "patriotically" transfer from his beloved Airacobra to the Soviet Yak.

Having beaten off the attack, the Soviet units launched a counteroffensive and drove the Germans out of Oglendow. By the end of August 15, the situation in this sector had stabilized. Rybalko's army went on the defensive, with 148 tanks and self-propelled guns in service.

In the Staszow area, the Germans for the first time put into action the 501st separate heavy tank battalion, which included 40 of the latest vehicles of the Ri Kroh UP Ach5Yo V type, known in our literature as the "royal tiger". This 68-ton tank, which had 150 mm thick frontal armor, was the heaviest and most protected combat vehicle of World War II. In duel combat, it outperformed all types of allied tanks, the magnificent long-barreled 88-mm cannon had no equal in terms of firing range and armor penetration and, in combination with excellent optics, made it possible to attack any chosen target head-on. The price for this was a lot of weight, size and low driving performance.

However, the first use of the "royal tigers" turned out to be as unsuccessful as the debut of the "tigers" ordinary near Leningrad at one time. The terrain in the offensive zone was weak, almost quicksand, in which even medium-sized "panthers" got stuck. The only passable place for heavy vehicles was a deep hollow, through which, crossing the front line, a dirt road stretched from Oglendow to Staszow. On this road, the German command, not having reliable reconnaissance information about the outline of the front line, launched the 501st heavy battalion on August 12. At the exit from the hollow, the "tigers" fell into a fire trap organized by Arkhipov's 53rd Guards Tank Brigade and the artillery reinforcement units attached to it. First, an ambush of three tanks, disguised as rye shocks, carried forward, let the column forward, fired on the German tanks on the starboard sides, knocking out four vehicles. The heavy battalion turned to the right, towards the ambush, and exposed itself to the massive fire of a tank brigade, a heavy self-propelled artillery regiment and howitzer divisions - more than 200 barrels with a caliber of up to 152 mm. At the same time, Soviet attack aircraft processed the hollow from the air. According to Soviet data, 24 "Tigers" P were hit, according to German - 11. The battalion headquarters was completely destroyed. Three perfectly serviceable "royal tigers", stuck in the sandy ground during the withdrawal, were captured as trophies and sent to Moscow.

The story of the first meeting with the "royal tigers" after the war acquired the character of hunting stories. Despite the fact that only 39 vehicles took part in the hostilities, it seems that literally all the participants in the battles on the bridgehead beat them, and they beat them easily. For example, historians of the 5th Guards Army claim that on the night of August 12, the soldiers of the 289th Regiment of the 97th Guards Rifle Division "captured four heavy tanks of the "Royal Tiger" type, which were first used by the enemy on our front." Although the unloading of the echelon on

Szydłów station barely started. Army General Zhadov himself claims that his troops clashed with the Gigr P on August 11, before the approach of Novikov's tankers: "... the pace of the enemy's offensive has significantly decreased, despite the use of new tanks, the so-called "royal tigers". I must say that these tanks had a number of negative qualities in comparison with the usual "tigers". Katukov, who was operating in a completely different direction, did not fail to boast: "But as before, our guardsmen on their" thirty-fours "beat ordinary

"tigers" and now just as successfully beat the "royal", because the 85-mm gun, which was now installed on the T-34, was not afraid of thick-walled armor. His political deputy, General N.K. Popel has its own story: it turns out that on the night of August 6, the battalion of the 1st Guards Tank Brigade captured 13 serviceable "royal tigers" in a night raid and presented them to Katukov: "Katukov's armor was especially striking ... The commander opened the hatch and whistled: "Wow toy! Even the ceiling is thirty millimeters."

For the sake of clarity, we recall that the Star of the Hero for this battle was received by Junior Lieutenant Alexander Petrovich Oskin, who was sitting in an ambush and destroyed three "tigers" of the guard, tank commander of the 53rd Guards Brigade of the 6th Tank Corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army. Brigade Commander Colonel Arkhipov became twice a Hero.

At the same time, the front command continued to reinforce its troops on the bridgehead. Between August 11 and 15, the 4th Tank Army, a rifle corps and some units of the 3rd Guards Army were transferred here from the Sanok area. Lelyushenko's army, having completed a 200-kilometer forced march over four nights, concentrated east of Staszow by the morning of August 15, with 141 tanks and self-propelled guns in service.

But the enemy continued to pull up and throw fresh units into battle. Having not achieved significant success in the Staszow area, on August 13, units of the 3rd, 24th and 1st Panzer and 371st Infantry Divisions hit in the direction of Stopnitsa, Polanets. And in this area, "the enemy threw dozens of tanks into battle, including the "Royal Tigers" (?). General Zhadov concentrated in the area of Stopnitsa three anti-tank and one cannon brigades, two anti-tank regiments, and a regiment of guards mortars. In the course of six days of fierce fighting, by August 18, the Germans managed to push the troops of the 5th Guards Army and the 31st Tank Corps by 6-10 km, captured Stopnitsa, but they failed to eliminate the bridgehead. On the morning of August 19, Zhadov, with the support of the 10th Guards Tank Corps, launched a counterattack and threw the enemy back to their original position.

Simultaneously with the reflection of the counterattack in the area of Stopnitsa, Konev decided to launch an offensive with the aim of encircling and destroying the 42nd German Army Corps, hanging over the right flank and operating in the Sandomierz area. The operation involved formations of the 13th and 1st Guards Tank Army, which had another 184 tanks, as well as the rifle corps of the 3rd Guards Army. On August 14, after an hour and a half of artillery preparation and air strikes, the troops of the front broke through the enemy defenses and, developing the offensive, inflicted serious damage on three German divisions. On August 18, units of the 13th Army captured Sandomierz, which gave greater stability to the right flank of the bridgehead.

The loss of Sandomierz forced the German command to stop attacks near Stopnitsa and transfer part of the tank divisions to the Ozaruwa area, from where a new counterattack to the south followed on August 19 to help the blockaded 72nd and 291st Infantry Divisions of the 42nd Army Corps. The troops of Pukhov and Katukov, who lacked ammunition and fuel, were unable to hold their positions. The Germans managed to connect with their encircled group. However, their tank divisions could not develop a strike on Sandomierz. Sovinformburo two days

later, as usual, it announced the complete annihilation of the Germans in the "cauldron": "... north of the city of Sandomierz, our troops completed the liquidation of the encircled grouping ... in view of the refusal to surrender, most of the encircled enemy troops were destroyed ..."

Having missed the Germans, knowing the truth, Katukov, and twenty years later, claimed that the encircled group was completely liquidated, referring to this ... to the message of the Sovinformburo. The cuckoo praises the rooster for praising the cuckoo.

From August 20 to August 23, formations of the 33rd Rifle Corps of the 5th Guards Army, reinforced by the 4th Guards Tank Corps, in cooperation with the 60th Army, captured an important railway junction and a large industrial center, the city of Debica and its surrounding areas.

The Germans made a new attempt to liquidate the Sandomierz bridgehead in the area of the so-called Jagów ledge. With strikes by four tank and two infantry divisions in converging directions, the enemy intended to encircle the Soviet troops in the Laguva area. The fighting reached a particularly fierce stage on 26 August. The German troops managed to capture the mountain range northwest of Opatuv and penetrate the defenses of the 13th Army for 6-7 km. As a result of retaliatory strikes by the 4th Tank, 5th Guards and 13th Armies, the situation was restored, part of the forces of the 16th Tank and 97th Mountain Rifle Divisions of the enemy were surrounded and destroyed. This ended the attempts of the German command to throw off the Soviet troops from the western bank of the Vistula.

Thus, the troops of the front repulsed all counterattacks and firmly secured the bridgehead, which was up to 75 km wide and 55 km deep. The presence of this important bridgehead provided the opportunity to deploy a large strike force on it for a subsequent offensive to the west, into Silesia.

At a time when there was a tense struggle on the Vistula, the troops of the left wing of the front, consisting of the 60th and 38th armies and Baranov's cavalry-mechanized group, continued their offensive to the west. It developed very slowly. The enemy offered stubborn resistance. The troops had to operate on very rugged terrain, replete with water barriers. The German command energetically waged a struggle to preserve communications leading to Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The advanced units of Moskalenko's army in mid-August reached the Wisloka River and overcame it in two sections, but as a result of persistent counterattacks, the 8th and 18th Panzer Divisions were forced to retreat back. By the end of the month, the front had stabilized at the line of Shchutsin, Debica, Krosno, Sanok.

This ended the Lvov-Sandomierz operation.

On August 29, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front went on the defensive. The 1st Guards Tank Army was withdrawn to the front reserve, the 3rd Guards Tank Army repelled enemy counterattacks in the northern section of the bridgehead until September, then was also withdrawn from the battle. The 4th Panzer, having received all the remaining armored vehicles from its neighbors, formed the second echelon of the front, reinforcing the most threatened areas while holding the Sandomierz bridgehead.

As a result of the operation, important strategic results were achieved: the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front inflicted a heavy defeat on the Northern Ukraine Army Group, cleared the western regions of Ukraine and southeastern regions of Poland from invaders, crossed the Vistula, captured a large bridgehead west of Sandomierz and created favorable conditions for new operations. The entire territory of Ukraine within the pre-war borders, with the exception of small sparsely populated areas, was returned to the bosom of the "family of free peoples." The heavy losses suffered by the enemy in this operation forced him to transfer up to eight divisions from Army Group South Ukraine to the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which made it easier for the troops

The 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts defeated the enemy forces in the area of Yass and Chisinau.

At the same time, General Radzievsky believed that the efficiency of the operation was low:

"At the same time, it should be noted that the large expenditure of forces and means by the 1st Ukrainian Front to break through the tactical defense zone and develop it into operational depth limited its ability to use the results of a strategic breakthrough. The total depth of advance of his troops turned out to be two times less than in the Belorussian operation, although he had more mobile formations than in all fronts advancing in Belarus north of Polesie. In addition, four tank corps of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front operated near the offensive zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Well, yes, for us, any losses are justified if there is a result.

The losses of the front amounted to 289,296 people killed and wounded, 1269 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1832 guns and mortars, 289 aircraft. Army Group "Northern Ukraine", according to Soviet sources, lost 200 thousand killed, wounded and captured.

The army and NKVD units immediately began to "normalize life" in the occupied territories: "To normalize life in the liberated Soviet and Polish lands, the struggle against the Nazi agents, the nationalist gangs, was intensified. Having no support among the population, the bandits engaged in terror: they killed local activists, tried to disrupt the conscription to the Red Army and the Polish Army, destroyed communications and communication lines, attacked the rear and small garrisons ... As a result of the measures taken, armed gangs in the front line were basically eliminated.

SEVENTH STALIN IMPACT

"..was carried out by the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in August in the Chisinau-Iasi region. By order of the Supreme Commander I.V. Stalin, the task of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts was to encircle and defeat the German-Romanian army group "Southern Ukraine" in the Chisinau region.

The relations of the Soviet Union with Romania, as, indeed, with all other neighbors, did not work out from the moment of the creation of "the world's first state of workers and peasants." As soon as they came to power and canceled all the obligations of the tsarist government, the Bolsheviks nationalized all valuables for the needs of the world revolution, including the gold reserves of Romania, which had been stored since 1915 in the Imperial Bank. While the Bolsheviks were conquering Russia, the Romanians, taking advantage of the situation, occupied and annexed Bessarabia in January 1918. In 1919, the Romanian troops took an active part in the suppression of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, at the same time winning the right to Bukovina and Transylvania. In a word, "boyar" Romania, as well as "pan" Poland, were the worst enemies of the Soviet power, and the Bessarabian issue made it even more difficult to establish normal relations. The USSR did not recognize the annexation of Bessarabia and repeatedly insisted on the return of the occupied territories, the Romanians, in turn, brazenly demanded the return of the gold reserves.

The great powers also did not legally recognize Bessarabia as part of Romania, but they did not particularly object. Moreover, the Romanian government constantly reminded that it was protecting the entire European civilization on the Dniester from Bolshevism. The Romanian royal government was intensely "friendly" with England and

France in exchange for guarantees of their immunity.

However, in the 1930s the situation changed dramatically: the Versailles system collapsed,

Anglo-French positions in Europe weakened more and more, the influence of Germany and Italy increased. The activities of the Communist Party, which received instructions from the Comintern, intensified: "... only the overthrow of the capitalist governments, only the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government and joining the Soviet Union on the basis of equality and reciprocity, only the implementation of socialism will provide the working people of the Balkan countries with national equality, a free and happy life" .

The beginning of the war in Europe, the successes of Germany, the passive position of England and France, the "popularization of the grandiose experience of the USSR" in Poland and Finland forced Bucharest to feverishly look for a real ally against Moscow. Attempts to get guaranteed support from the neighbors did not bring results. Hungary and Bulgaria had their own territorial claims against Romania. Italy expected to continue rapprochement with Hungary and limited itself to general promises. All this required Romania to revise its foreign policy in favor of rapprochement with the only possible adversary of the USSR at that time - Germany. On April 15, 1940, King Carol II expressed the opinion that Romania should join the "German political line". On May 28, 1940, a new German-Romanian treaty was signed, according to which it was supposed to increase oil supplies to Berlin by 30% in exchange for providing the Romanian army with modern weapons. The Romanian leadership began to insistently offer Hitler cooperation in any field at his request. At the same time, attempts were made to improve relations with the Soviet Union. On June 1, Romania proposed to the USSR to expand trade, but the Soviet side did not support this proposal; Stalin had already decided on the final settlement of the Bessarabian question.

On June 26, the Soviet government issued an ultimatum to Romania demanding to clear the territory of Bessarabia, and along with Northern Bukovina, which had never been part of the Russian Empire. 48 hours were given to make a decision. Berlin, interested in mutually beneficial cooperation with Moscow in redrawing the map of Europe, advised Bucharest to yield, and by the end of the next day the Romanian government accepted the Soviet terms. On June 28, 1940, the divisions of the Red Army, led by Zhukov, moved to the Dniester, to liberate the Moldovans and Ukrainians from the oppression of the "Romanian boyars". On June 29, the first echelons reached the Prut River and occupied crossings; by the end of July 1, the new border was completely occupied by Soviet troops. The occupation did not end with the occupation of the territories: the Soviet side, in addition, demanded from Romania the return of the stolen rolling stock and "compensation for damage" caused by the Romanian army during the withdrawal from Bessarabia, estimating it at almost 2.6 billion lei.

In this situation, Hungary and Bulgaria decided that it was time for them to realize their territorial claims too. In an effort to fan the contradictions in the Balkans and increase their own influence, they were supported by all the great powers, including the Soviet Union. As a result of the Romanian-Bulgarian negotiations held in August-September and the second Vienna arbitration, Romania transferred the territory of Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria, and Northern Transylvania went to Hungary. The total area of the country has decreased by 49 thousand square meters. km and a population of 3 million people. Germany guaranteed the inviolability of the new borders.

It goes without saying that from the point of view of the Kremlin myth-makers, the occupation of Bessarabia and Bukovina by the Red Army "meet the interests of all peoples interested in resolving the conflict and served the cause of strengthening Soviet-Romanian relations", but the rejection of Northern Transylvania demonstrated "the rejection of the reactionary rulers of Romania from the remnants of sovereignty."

On September 6, 1940, Carol P abdicated in favor of his son Mihai I, and the former Chief of the General Staff, General Ion Antonescu, became the head of the Romanian government. The new Romanian government, unaware that its

relations with the proletarian state "strongened" significantly, it decided to speed up rapprochement with Germany, and already on September 15-17 a request was sent to Berlin to send a military mission to Romania. In the first decade of December, German troops with a total of 25 thousand people arrived in Romania to train the Romanian army and protect oil sources. On November 23, 1940, Romania officially joined the Tripartite Pact.

In January 1941, Antonescu agreed to the passage of German troops through Romanian territory to attack Yugoslavia and Greece. In May of the same year, Romania accepted Hitler's offer to deploy German troops on its territory intended to attack the Soviet Union and take part in the war against the USSR. In addition, Romania was the main supplier of oil to Germany.

On June 22, 1941, the Antonescu government sent 13 divisions and 9 brigades to the front as part of the 3rd and 4th armies. Until mid-August, they operated on the territory of Bessarabia and (Northern Bukovina). After crossing the Dniester, the 3rd Army, renamed expeditionary, fought under Manstein's 11th Army in southern Ukraine and in the Crimea. The 4th Romanian Army after capturing Odessa was returned to Romania.

In the summer campaign of 1942, the Romanian government, at the request of Hitler, again allocated a significant contingent of troops for operations on the Eastern Front. 26 Romanian divisions operated near Stalingrad. On the Volga, the Red Army utterly defeated the 3rd Army and the 6th Army Corps, after which the number of Romanian divisions in the active troops was significantly reduced. From June 22, 1941 to January 1944, the Romanian army lost up to 660 thousand people, including irrevocably - about 410 thousand.

In 1944, Romania was experiencing a deep internal political crisis. After Stalingrad and Kursk, the desire to conclude a separate peace with Britain and the United States intensified in leading circles, but secret negotiations with the allies did not lead to success. Churchill's "Balkan option" had by then been rejected in favor of Operation Overlord.

At the end of March, Konev's armies reached the Soviet-Romanian border. On April 2, 1944, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the USSR issued a statement stating: "The Soviet government informs that the advancing units of the Red Army, pursuing the German armies and the Romanian troops allied with them, crossed the Prut River in several sections and entered Romanian territory. The Supreme High Command of the Red Army issued an order to the Soviet advancing units to pursue the enemy until he was defeated and capitulated.

At the same time, the Soviet government declares that it does not pursue the goal of acquiring any part of Romanian territory or changing the existing social system of Romania, and that the entry of Soviet troops into Romania is dictated solely by military necessity and the continued resistance of enemy troops.

On April 10, the GKO adopted a resolution in which instructions were given on the line of conduct of the Soviet troops and command on the territory of Romania. The military command was required to preserve the existing Romanian authorities, the system of administrative and social structure. The general management of the organization of civilian administration and control over its activities was entrusted to the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. The work of the local administration was directed by Soviet military commandants appointed from among "politically trained and

morally stable officers.

At the request of the Romanian government, on April 12, Moscow offered Romania the following terms for a truce: a break with the Germans and a declaration of war on Germany; restoration of the border under the 1940 treaty; compensation for losses caused to the Soviet Union in the course of hostilities on its territory and occupation; providing Soviet and other allied troops with the opportunity to move freely on Romanian territory in any direction in accordance with the military situation. The Antonescu government refused to accept these terms. Well, Comrade Stalin said, the peoples "will have to take matters into their own hands of their liberation from the German yoke," and the Red Army will fulfill its "internationalist duty."

In terms of the summer-autumn campaign, the offensive of the Soviet troops in the Southwestern theater of operations was of the utmost importance. After the landing of the Allied troops in Normandy, Stalin was no longer in a hurry to visit Berlin, which would have led to an immediate end to the war. Until that moment, it was necessary to "liberate from the fascist yoke" as many European countries as possible, "thwart plans for their enslavement by the imperialist states" and, under the reliable protection of the USSR, "to decide their own fate."

"The most important thing was also that," General Professor M.M. Minasyan, "that the liberation of these peoples by the Red Army should inevitably lead to the creation of genuine people's democratic regimes in the Balkans..."

The success of the strike in the south deprived the Reich of its allies and the possibility of obtaining strategic materials and food exported from Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, threatened with access to the borders of Germany itself. The Germans understood this very well and attached great importance to the southern sector of the front, which covered the path to the Balkans, but they miscalculated twice in assessing the situation. At first, they expected a Soviet strike south of the Carpathians, pulling most of the tank divisions to the threatened direction, but instead disaster struck in the Army Group Center zone. The German command came to the conclusion that the enemy had postponed the "Balkan option" for a while, that a major offensive operation in the south was unlikely in the near future, and made major regroupings in the Warsaw, Krakow and East Prussian directions - and again they were mistaken.

On July 15, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General A.I. Antonov handed over to the command of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts the order of the Headquarters to submit by the end of the month their considerations and calculations on conducting a joint offensive operation in the Iasi and Chisinau region in order to defeat the troops of the Southern Ukraine Army Group, liberate Moldova and withdraw Romania from the war .

IASSIAN-CHISINAU OPERATION

By mid-August 1944, at a 580 km line passing through Krasnoilsk, Pashkani, north of Yass and further along the Dniester to the Black Sea, the troops of the Southern Ukraine Army Group under the command of General Hans Frisner, divided into two army groups: Wöhler, occupied - 8th German, 4th Romanian armies and the 17th separate German army corps and "Dumitrescu" - 6th German and 3rd Romanian armies. The troops of the army group had 25 German and 22 Romanian divisions, 5 Romanian mountain rifle and infantry brigades. They were supported by part of the forces of the 4th Air Fleet and the Romanian Aviation Corps. Before that, at the end of July, 12 divisions, including 6 armored and 1 motorized, from the Army Group "Southern Ukraine" were transferred to Belarus and Western Ukraine.

The withdrawal of such a significant number of divisions from the Army Group "Southern Ukraine" led to its weakening and greatly worried Antonescu. On August 4, the marshal met with Hitler to find out the further intentions of the Reich leadership. The Fuhrer assured the Romanian dictator that the Wehrmacht would defend Romania as its own territory. But, in turn, he demanded assurances from Antonescu that Romania would remain an ally of the Reich under any circumstances and would take over the maintenance of the German troops operating on Romanian territory.

Using numerous water barriers and hilly terrain, the enemy created a strong defense with a developed system of field fortifications, engineering barriers and a number of long-term reinforced concrete structures to a depth of 80 km. It included three, on the Iasi direction four defensive lines. In addition, in the depths, lines along the Prut and Seret rivers were equipped. The German-Romanian group with rears consisted of 900 thousand people, 7600 guns and mortars, 404 tanks and assault guns, 810 aircraft.

When planning the operation, the Soviet command took into account that the enemy troops were deployed on an arc curved to the east, the left wing of which rested on the Carpathians, and the right wing on the Black Sea. At the same time, most divisions and the most combat-ready German 6th Army occupied the top of the ledge; the operational density here was 8 km per division. On the flanks, the operational density reached 18-20 km per division, and mainly Romanian troops defended there. The Stalingrad disposition was exactly repeated. True, in order to increase the stability of the Romanian divisions, in which capitulation moods grew, they were interspersed with German formations, which were supposed to play the role of "corset knitting needles for the Romanians."

On August 2, the Headquarters sent a directive with specific tasks to the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts. They were to break through the enemy's defenses in two areas far apart from each other - northwest of Yass and south of Bendery - and, striking in converging directions, encircle and destroy the main forces of the South Ukraine Army Group, and then develop the offensive at a high pace in depth of Romania.

The 2nd Ukrainian Front, commanded by General Malinovsky, delivered the main blow with the forces of the 27th, 52nd, 53rd combined arms and 6th tank armies from the area northwest of Yass in the general direction to Vaslui, Falchii, cutting off the escape routes the Yassko-Kishinev grouping of the enemy to the west, an auxiliary strike - by the forces of the 7th Guards Army and the cavalry-mechanized group along the Seret River to ensure the right flank of the main grouping. After the encirclement of the Yassko-Kishinev grouping, the main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were to advance in the direction of Focsani, forming the outer front of the encirclement and, together with the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, destroy the encircled grouping.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front, under the command of General Tolbukhin, delivered the main blow with the forces of the 57th, 37th and right wing of the 46th Army from the Kitskansky bridgehead, from the area south of Bender, in the direction of Yermoklia, Selemet, Khushi, an auxiliary strike was carried out by part of the forces of 46 -th Army in cooperation with the Danube military flotilla through the Dniester estuary in the direction of Belgorod-Dniester. The Danube flotilla was supposed to land troops northwest and south of the city, and with the release of troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front to the Danube, assist them in crossing the river and ensure unhindered movement along it. After the encirclement of the Yassko-Kishinev grouping, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front were tasked with developing the offensive in the general direction of Reni and Izmail, preventing the enemy from withdrawing beyond the Prut and Danube.

The actions of the ground forces were supported by the 5th and 17th air armies. The Black Sea Fleet had the task of supporting the troops of the coastal flank of the 3rd

of the Ukrainian Front, to disrupt the coastal sea communications of the enemy, to inflict air strikes on his naval bases.

The coordination of the actions of the fronts was carried out by the representative of the Headquarters, Marshal S.K. Timoshenko.

91] a division, 3 fortified areas, 3 tank and 3 mechanized corps, 2 separate tank, 1 self-propelled artillery brigade and 1 motorized rifle brigade, 7 tank and 20 self-propelled artillery regiments - 1,314,200 people, 16,000 guns and mortars, 893 rocket artillery installations, 1,870 tanks and self-propelled guns and 2,200 combat aircraft. The Soviet troops included the 1st Romanian Volunteer Infantry Division named after Tudor Vladimirescu, recruited from Romanian emigrants and former prisoners of war.

In the course of preparation, a number of regroupings were carried out, powerful strike groups were created in the directions of the main attacks. 67-72% of infantry, up to 61% of artillery, 85% of tanks, and almost all aviation were concentrated here. Thanks to this, in the breakthrough sectors, the fronts had superiority over the enemy: in people - 4-8 times, in artillery - 6-11 times, in tanks - 6 times. This provided them with the opportunity to continuously build up the power of strikes and maintain high rates of advance. Artillery density in the breakthrough areas reached 240-280 barrels per || km front. Such a high concentration of firepower allowed Malinovsky to abandon the aviation preparation for a breakthrough. For the first time in the war, perspective aerial photography of all the main routes of action of mobile troops and crossings to a depth of 60-80 km was made on both fronts. During the spring, the fronts mobilized about 400 thousand people in the liberated regions of Ukraine, in some formations the replenishment amounted to more than half of the personnel.

On August 18-19, the Germans finally revealed the Soviet preparations for the offensive and even set a date for its start. General Frisner addressed all senior officers of the German and Romanian troops with a special appeal, in which he warned that in the coming days a large offensive of the Red Army should be expected. Frisner demanded to defend positions to the last possible, to ensure close cooperation of the Allied forces: "Shoulder to shoulder with our experienced Romanian comrades, relying on our combat training, our weapons and our fortified positions, we can meet these

attacks."

There was no more time left.

The offensive of both fronts began on the morning of August 20 after strong artillery, and on the 3rd Ukrainian Front and aviation training, which suppressed the first position of the main line of defense.

The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front on the very first day broke through the tactical defense of the enemy to the full depth and advanced 16 km. The German command, trying to stop the advance, in the Yass region threw three infantry and 1st tank divisions into counterattacks. But this did not change the situation, since more than 1000 Soviet tanks entered the business. In the band of the 27th Army, General S.G. Trofimenko, after overcoming the second line of defense, the 6th Panzer Army under the command of General A.G. was introduced into the breakthrough. Kravchenko, who had 506 combat vehicles. This was the only case during World War II when a tank army entered a "clean" breakthrough. By the end of the day, its formations reached the third defensive strip, which ran along the Mare ridge. The offensive of the 3rd Ukrainian Front also developed at a high pace. During the day, the 37th, 46th and 57th armies broke through the main line of defense and, having advanced 12 km deep, in some places wedged into

second lane.

The calculation turned out to be accurate: the Romanians faltered, again exposing the flanks of the German divisions. General Frisner writes: "... the reason for this relatively quick success was not numerical superiority, but, above all, the insufficient stamina and unreliability of many Romanian formations ... A significant part of the personnel of these divisions abandoned their positions even during artillery preparation ... the enemy unexpectedly quickly managed to penetrate deeply into the location of the 7th and 5th Romanian infantry divisions, which left their positions without a fight.

During August 20, Army Group "Southern Ukraine" lost 6 divisions at once and in one day was on the verge of disaster. In the evening, General Wehler reported: "The impression that the Romanian units make can be defined as catastrophic."

On the second day of the offensive, the strike force of the 2nd Ukrainian Front waged a stubborn struggle for the third lane on the Mare ridge, and the 7th Guards Army of General M.S. Shumilov and the horse-mechanized group of General S.I. Gorshkov - for Tirgu Frumos. On August 21, the German command pulled together units of 12 divisions, including two tank divisions, to the breakthrough area. The most stubborn battles unfolded on the outskirts of Iasi, where the enemy troops launched counterattacks three times. But the introduction of the 18th (250 vehicles) and 23rd (190 vehicles) tank and 5th guards cavalry corps into battle in the band of the 52nd Army frustrated Frisner's plans. By the end of the day, Malinovsky's troops finally crushed the enemy's defenses. Having expanded the breakthrough to 65 km along the front and up to 40 km in depth and having overcome the third defensive line, they captured the cities of Iasi and Tirgu Frumos and entered the operational space.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front also completed the breakthrough that day. The 7th (203 vehicles) and 4th Guards (237 vehicles) mechanized corps introduced into the battle advanced up to 30 km in depth and actually cut off the 6th German army from the 3rd Romanian.

On the evening of August 21, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the fronts to reach the Khushi area as quickly as possible in order to complete the encirclement of the enemy grouping and open the road to the main economic and political centers of Romania.

On August 22, the German command began the withdrawal of the Dumitrescu group from the Chisinau ledge over the Prut River. At the same time, the Veler group received an order to retreat to the rear defensive position Trajan. But it was already too late. On the morning of August 22, the 4th Guards Army of General I.V. went on the offensive along the river. Galanina. Acting in conjunction with the 52nd Army of General K.A. Koroteeva, by the end of the day she advanced 25 km and took possession of two crossings over the Prut. Bypassing the nodes of enemy resistance, the 18th Panzer Corps made a swift 50-kilometer throw to Khushi. On the outer front of the encirclement, Soviet troops captured Vaslui. Kravchenko's tank army rushed to the Focsha Gates in order to break through the fortified area on the move and thereby open the way to Central Romania, Bulgaria, to the borders of Yugoslavia and Hungary.

Tolbukhin's front also achieved major successes. Connections of the 7th mechanized corps of General F.G. Katkova went to the Gura-Galbena area, and the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps, having occupied Tarutino and Comrat, developed an offensive on Leovo. Thus, the 3rd Romanian army was finally isolated from the 6th German army.

By the end of August 22, the shock groups of the fronts had intercepted the main routes of the enemy's retreat to the west. The sailors of the Danube Flotilla, together with the landing group of the 46th Army, crossed the Dniester Estuary, liberated the city of Belgorod-

Dniester and developed an offensive in a southwestern direction.

On August 23, the 18th Tank Corps went to the Khushi area, the 7th Mechanized Corps to the crossings over the Prut in the Leuseni area, and the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps to

Leovo. The operational encirclement of the Chisinau enemy grouping was completed.

On the same day, the 46th Army of General I.T. Shlemina, in cooperation with the Danube Flotilla, completed the encirclement of the 3rd Romanian Army, which ceased resistance the next day. The Dumitrescu group ceased to exist. The 6th Army was transferred to the direct subordination of the command of the Army Group "Southern Ukraine". The army was given the task of quickly moving troops across the Prut and organizing defenses on its western bank. But these attempts were in vain, the front collapsed, no one controlled the troops: "... there were no longer headquarters, no rears, no special non-combat units; everyone, from the general to the staff clerk, turned into ordinary fighters.

At 8:30 pm on August 23, the German command became aware of the major political changes in Romania and the fall of the Antonescu government. The position of the German troops has changed radically. Three hours later, a decision was made, sanctioned by Hitler, to withdraw by the shortest route to the Carpathians. But this task proved to be impossible.

On August 24, the 5th shock army of General N.E. Berzarina liberated Chisinau. On August 25, the creation of an internal front to encircle the Yassko-Chisinau enemy grouping was completed. 18 out of 25 German divisions ended up in a giant "cauldron". Almost all the Romanian formations at the front were defeated by this time.

Thus, on the fifth day of the operation, the encirclement of the main forces of Army Group South Ukraine was achieved. The troops operating on the external front occupied the cities of Roman, Bacau, Byrlad and approached the city of Tekuch. A band 100-120 km deep formed between the inner and outer fronts of the encirclement. Thus, favorable conditions were created for the elimination of the encircled grouping and the rapid advance of Soviet troops deep into Romanian territory. These tasks were already being solved in the new military-political conditions.

The Soviet command, having allocated 34 divisions, one tank and two mechanized corps to eliminate the encircled group, the rest of the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, including the 6th tank army, aimed deep into Romania. In the development of the offensive on the external front, the main role was assigned to the troops of Malinovsky.

By the end of August 27, the group surrounded to the east of the Prut ceased to exist. Soon that part of the troops was also destroyed, which managed to cross to the western bank of the Prut with the intention of breaking through to the Carpathian passes. The enemy suffered a crushing defeat. Of the 25 German formations, 18 were eliminated, two divisions of the 17th Army Corps withdrew in full force. The defeated units of three infantry divisions and the remnants of the 1st Panzer and 10th Motorized Divisions also managed to escape. The command of the Army Group "South Ukraine" stated that the corps and divisions of the 6th Army must be considered as completely lost and that this defeat represents the biggest catastrophe that the Army Group has ever experienced.

At this time, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were developing success towards Northern Transylvania and in the Foksha direction, reaching the approaches to Ploiesti and

Bucharest. Formations of the 46th Army of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, in cooperation with the Black Sea Fleet, launched an offensive in the coastal direction.

The German command made attempts to detain the Soviet troops, buy time to restore the front. In the OKW directive of August 26, General Frisner was tasked with creating and maintaining defenses along the line of the Eastern Carpathians, Fokshany, Galati, although the army group did not have the strength to do this,

no funds. Six heavily battered divisions of the 8th Army retreated to the Carpathians. There were 29 Hungarian battalions on the Hungarian-Romanian border, which operated mainly in front of the right wing and the center of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. In front of its left wing and the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the remnants of the formations retreating from the front, as well as the rear units of the Southern Ukraine Army Group and individual German garrisons, defended themselves.

The enemy put up stubborn resistance on the outskirts of the Eastern Carpathians. The remnants of the German divisions concentrated here and the Hungarian battalions fought using the mountainous and wooded terrain, which was advantageous for defense. However, the 7th Guards, 40th Army of General Zhmachenko and the cavalry mechanized group of Gorshkov, advancing in this direction, managed to push the enemy back and overcome the Eastern Carpathians.

The offensive of the troops of the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, which included the 27th, 53rd, 6th tank armies and the 18th tank corps, was successfully developing. These troops, with the active support of aviation, crushed individual pockets of resistance and quickly moved south. The tank army overcame the Focsani fortified line and occupied Focsani on August 26. The next day, she approached the city of Buzau, the mastery of which opened the way to Ploiesti and Bucharest.

Tolbukhin's troops, advancing south along both banks of the Danube, cut off the retreat of the defeated enemy troops to Bucharest. The Danube Flotilla and the Black Sea Fleet, assisting the offensive of the ground forces, provided crossings across the Danube, landed troops, and struck with naval aviation.

By August 29, the cities of Tulcea, Galati, Constanta, Sulina and others were occupied.

Thus, the fronts of Generals Malinovsky and Tolbukhin successfully carried out the Iasi-Kishinev operation, surrounded and destroyed the largest enemy grouping in an exceptionally short time. During the fighting from August 20 to September 3, Soviet troops defeated and destroyed 22 German and almost all Romanian divisions at the front. 106 thousand German soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, including 25 generals and a huge amount of military equipment. The enemy suffered such heavy damage that it took him about a month to restore a continuous front.

The Iasi-Chisinau operation is one of the largest and most outstanding operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in terms of its strategic and military-political significance. Such a large-scale and decisive defeat led to the collapse of the German defense on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front, and changed the entire military-political situation in the Balkans. Romania withdrew from the war on the side of Germany and on August 24 declared war on it.

The losses of the Soviet troops in ten days of fighting amounted to 13,197 people killed and 53,933 wounded, 75 tanks and self-propelled guns, 111 aircraft.

Back in June 1944, at a secret meeting of representatives of the palace circles, the army, the national and communist parties, a military

a committee that set out to prepare an armed uprising, overthrow the Antonescu government and withdraw Romania from the war on the side of the Axis powers. The beginning of the uprising was scheduled for August 26, but the rapid development of events at the front accelerated the performance. On the evening of August 23, on the orders of King Mihai, Marshal Antonescu was arrested in the royal palace in Bucharest and, together with his ministers, was placed under arrest in a safe house of the Central Committee of the CPR. Parts of the garrison were ordered to occupy and protect state institutions, the central telephone exchange, telegraph, radio station and other important objects, interrupt communications between German institutions and military units and prevent their movement.

In the very first hours of the uprising, a so-called government of specialists was formed under the chairmanship of General C. Sanatescu, in which the national-bourgeois parties played a leading role. At 11:30 p.m., Bucharest radio announced the removal of the Antonescu government and the creation of a "government of national unity", the declaration of the Romanian king on the cessation of hostilities against the United Nations and the acceptance by Romania of the Soviet conditions of a truce was announced.

On the morning of August 24, the Chief of the Romanian General Staff sent a telegram to Frisner's headquarters. It stated that "the command of the Romanian armed forces ensures the free exit of German units from the territory of Romania and wishes to avoid all kinds of armed clashes between German and Romanian troops, provided that the German troops do not obstruct the Romanian troops during their movement to the south ... Romanian land, air and naval forces stop fighting and all hostile activities against the Soviet troops ... "

This option did not suit either Hitler or Stalin.

The People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the USSR made a statement in which it confirmed the Soviet position, but did not fail to recall that "the assistance of the Romanian troops to the troops of the Red Army in the elimination of German troops is the only means of an early cessation of hostilities on the territory of Romania and the conclusion of a truce by Romania with the coalition of allies."

The Fuhrer, of course, reacted more sharply. As Clark notes, the Nazis were sincerely amazed at the betrayal of the Allies every time: "Unbelievable as it may seem, the "betrayal" of the Allies and the explosions of hatred and revenge that began to occur in the occupied territories when the German administration was weakened were a shock to the Wehrmacht and even to the SS. Until now, having followed with serene confidence the Machiavellian precept "Better to be feared than loved", the Germans nevertheless believed that since they are a nation of masters, no one but the Bolsheviks and Jews would ever think to resist them.

Having received news of the events in Bucharest, Hitler ordered the "putsch to be suppressed", the king to be arrested, and a government to be created headed by a general friendly to Germany. Frisner was given emergency powers to operate in Romania. Field Marshal Keitel and General Guderian, in a report to the Fuhrer, proposed "to take all measures to ensure that Romania disappears from the map of Europe, and the Romanian people cease to exist as a nation."

On the morning of August 24, the Germans bombarded Bucharest and went on the offensive, for which they managed to scrape together the 5th anti-aircraft division, an infantry regiment, a tank company and two assault gun brigades. General management of the operation was entrusted to the head of the German air force mission in Romania, General A. Gerstenberg. Frisner ordered the commanders of the German military units stationed in the rear areas of Romania to support Gerstenberg with all

with the forces and means at their disposal. On August 26, it became obvious that the general could not cope with the task. The troops sent against the rebels were led by General Stachel, the former commandant of Warsaw. In connection with the opening of hostilities by German troops against Romania, the Romanian government ordered its troops to start hostilities for the expulsion of the Germans from the country and for the liberation of Transylvania.

At the beginning of the uprising, the Germans had about 14 thousand soldiers and officers in Bucharest and its suburbs. In addition, they hoped to transfer part of the forces from the Ploiesti region to the city. The

German command pinned great hopes on the paramilitary formations of the Romanian Germans, in which there were over 40 thousand people. On the side of the rebels in the capital there were about 7 thousand military personnel and 50

armed patriotic groups. However, the German command failed to use the superiority in forces and suppress the uprising in Bucharest. Soviet troops continued to finish off the German formations and rapidly advanced towards the city. At the same time, Romanian troops from other parts of the country began to arrive in Bucharest. The balance of power here was rapidly changing in favor of the rebels. By August 28, the number of Romanian troops in the capital reached about 39 thousand people. This allowed the rebels not only to repel the attacks of the Germans, but also to take decisive action themselves and defeat the German garrison. The next day, they cleared Bucharest and its environs of the enemy and held them until the approach of Soviet troops. Armed clashes with the Germans also took place in Ploiesti, Brasov and some other cities and regions of Romania.

The troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, after the successful completion of the Jassy-Kishinev operation, launched a vigorous offensive in the central part of Romania and on the outskirts of Bulgaria.

On August 29, the Stavka set the task for Malinovsky and Tolbukhin to complete the defeat of the Nazis in Romania. The 2nd Ukrainian Front was to develop the offensive in the direction of Turnu Severin with the main forces, occupy the Ploiesti oil-industrial region, clear Bucharest of the remnants of German troops, and by September 7 capture the Kampulung, Pitesti, Giurgiu line. In the future, this grouping of troops was to reach the Danube south of Turnu Severin. The troops of the right wing of the front advanced in a northwestern direction with the task of capturing the passes through the Eastern Carpathians and by September 15 reaching the line of Bistrica, Cluj, Sibiu. Then they struck at Satu Mare in order to assist the 4th Ukrainian Front in overcoming the Carpathians and reaching the areas of Uzhgorod and Mukachevo. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, developing the offensive in their entire zone, were to occupy Northern Dobruja, force the Danube in the Galati, Izmil sector, and reach the Romanian-Bulgarian border by September 5-6.

Fulfilling the directive of the Headquarters, Malinovsky's troops delivered new powerful blows to the enemy. Overcoming the stubborn resistance of the German troops, the 5th Guards Tank Corps of the 6th Tank Army on August 29 defeated them on the outskirts of Ploiesti and broke into the city. By the morning of August 30, by the joint efforts of the corps and the 3rd Guards Airborne Division of the 27th Army, Ploiesti was completely cleared of the enemy. Together with the Soviet troops, the 18th Romanian Infantry Division, which operated from the front, as well as Romanian units and work detachments blocked by the Germans in the city, participated in the liberation of Ploiesti.

During August 30 and 31, Soviet and Romanian troops defeated the enemy in the valley of the Prakhova River and liberated the entire Ploeshty region. As a result, the threat to Bucharest from the north was eliminated, the Wehrmacht lost Romanian oil, and Soviet troops were able to quickly advance into Transylvania. General Butlar

noted: "... On August 30, the Russians captured the Ploiesti oil region, despite the stubborn resistance of individual scattered units supported from the air. From a military-economic point of view, this was the most difficult and, one might say, decisive blow for Germany.

Two other corps of Kravchenko's tank army successfully advanced on Bucharest. Following them, the troops of the 53rd Army of General I.M. Managarov, and to the south of it the 46th army of Shlemin. Their task was to defeat the German units blocking the approaches to Bucharest as quickly as possible and to assist the rebels.

The "reactionary figures" in the Romanian government were well aware that along with the Red Army, the Soviet order would also come to Bucharest. Therefore, they tried to prevent this, insisting on stopping the further advance of the Red Army deep into Romania, proposing to declare Bucharest, the Ilfov region and the entire

the western territory of the country as a zone where Soviet troops were not supposed to enter. With such a proposal, representatives of Sanatescu turned to both commanders of the fronts. At the same time, it was pointed out that the Romanian government was taking upon itself the liquidation of German troops on the territory not yet occupied by the "liberators". The generals did not even listen to this childish babble and continued to fulfill the tasks set by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The 6th Panzer, 53rd and 46th armies came close to Bucharest and thus ensured the consolidation of the victory of the uprising.

Separate parts of Shlemin's army passed through the Romanian capital on August 29-30. On August 30 and 31, troops of the 6th Panzer and 53rd Soviet armies, as well as parts of the Vladimirescu division, entered Bucharest. The Soviet command appointed Major General I.N. Burenin and took "under the protection of the main Romanian war criminals" - members of the Antonescu government. On June 1, 1946, they were executed by the people's court.

The further offensive of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was already carried out jointly with the Romanian army, which turned its weapons against the German Reich. By the beginning of the entry into the war with Germany, Romania had two armies, including nine combat-ready divisions, the remnants of seven defeated divisions returning from the front, and 21 training divisions. They were poorly armed, had a small amount of artillery and had almost no tanks.

Formations of the 1st Romanian Army, commanded by General N. Machich, covered the border with Hungary and Yugoslavia in the west and northwest. They were at a distance of 200-300 km from the Soviet troops. From the remnants of the 3rd and 4th Romanian armies, the 4th army was formed under the command of General G. Avramescu. She received the task of covering the Romanian-Hungarian border in the north.

An exceptionally favorable situation developed for the Soviet troops in Romania. Up to six enemy divisions operated in front of the right wing and the center of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, there were no German troops in front of the left wing and Tolbukhin's armies. The prospect opened up in a short time to completely clear the territory of Romania from the enemy. After the withdrawal of the Headquarters of the 4th Guards and 52nd armies into the reserve, Malinovsky had four combined arms armies, which had 10 rifle corps; one rifle corps was in front reserve.

The German command sought to restore the collapsed strategic front, close the southern flank of Army Group South Ukraine with Army Group F, located in Yugoslavia, and create a strong defense along the Eastern and Southern Carpathians and the Western Balkans. It concentrated the remnants of the Southern Ukraine Army Group, as well as the Hungarian units, in Transylvania, intending to launch a surprise attack on the Romanian troops and capture the passes in the Carpathians before leaving

there Soviet troops.

On the morning of September 5, five German and Hungarian divisions, supported by tanks and aircraft from the Turda region, launched an offensive against the 4th Romanian Army, which had just entered this sector and did not have time to organize defense. By the end of September 6, the enemy managed to advance 20-30 km. In the next two days, under his onslaught, the Romanians retreated another 20-25 km. At the same time, the Germans launched an offensive against the 1st Romanian army. On September 6, they crossed the Danube northwest of Turnu Severin and threatened to capture the city of Timisoara and the large industrial center of Resita.

In this difficult situation, by agreement with the government of Romania, the 1st and 4th Romanian armies, the 4th separate army corps and the 1st aviation corps - a total of 20 divisions - from September 6 came under the operational control of the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. By that time, they had 138 thousand people, 1809 mortars, 611 guns and 113 serviceable aircraft.

Malinovsky, in order to defeat the enemy grouping advancing against the 4th Romanian army, immediately sent the 27th and 6th tank armies. To destroy the enemy forces advancing against the 1st Romanian army, the 53rd army and the 18th tank corps were involved. The actions of these troops were supported by the 5th Air Army, which included the Romanian Aviation Corps.

On September 5, the Headquarters ordered the 2nd Ukrainian Front, advancing in a westerly direction, to turn its main forces to the north and northwest and strike at Cluj and Deva, and the right-flank armies to overcome the Transylvanian Alps and the southern part of the Carpathian ridge ... The general task was is to reach the line of Satu Mare, Cluj, Deva, Turnu Severin and help the 4th Ukrainian Front break into Transcarpathia. In the future, he had to go to the Tissa River in the Nyiregyhaza, Szeged section.

We had to advance in extremely difficult conditions. Tanks with difficulty overcame the Carpathian passes. Enemy aircraft continuously bombed the narrow mountain passes. Finally, the troops of the 6th Panzer Army, having overcome the mountain range, reached the Sibiu region on September 7th. Soviet and Romanian soldiers jointly repelled the enemy's counterattacks and went on the offensive. Especially stubborn battles flared up near the city of Turda.

From August 31 to September 6, the 46th and 57th armies of the 3rd Ukrainian Front marched in a southwestern direction and, without meeting resistance, reached the Bulgarian border. Following them, the 37th Army advanced to the coastal flank.

On September 12, an Armistice Agreement with Romania was signed in Moscow. The Soviet-Romanian border of 1940 was restored and the "Viennese arbitration" on Northern Transylvania was annulled. The Romanian government undertook to send at least 2 infantry divisions to participate in the war against Germany and Hungary under the general leadership of the Soviet command, as well as to compensate for the losses caused to the USSR.

To control the fulfillment of the terms of the armistice, the Allied Control Commission was created in Romania, consisting of representatives of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain, chaired by Marshal R.Ya. Malinovsky.

Meanwhile, the main forces of the front, continuing the offensive, fought fierce battles with the stubbornly defending enemy.

On September 9, the Stavka reinforced the front with the 4th and 6th Guards Cavalry Corps from its reserve, and on September 10, with the 46th Army and the 7th Mechanized Corps, transferred from the 3rd Ukrainian Front. The right neighbor - the front of General Petrov - that day began the Carpathian offensive operation and slowly moved towards the passes.

By September 15, with the efforts of the 27th and 6th Panzer (September 12 became Guards) armies and the 4th Romanian Army, the enemy was driven back to their original positions. The troops reached the defensive line, passing along the rivers Muresh and Aries. Under their onslaught, the German-Hungarian formations began to leave their positions in a number of sectors and retreat into the interior of the country. 53rd Army and 18th Tank Corps of General P.D. Govorunenko, who advanced into the defense zone of the 1st Romanian Army, by the end of September 12, forward formations reached the Petrosheni area and Turnu-Severin. Acting ahead, the tank corps captured the regions of Brad and Deva. The troops of General Managarov, having overcome the Transylvanian Alps, reached these areas three days ahead of schedule. They defeated the advanced units of the enemy and seized a bridgehead for the deployment of army and front forces in the Hungarian plain. Having repulsed the enemy's fierce attacks, the Soviet and Romanian troops thwarted his attempts to capture the passes.

The successful actions of the main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the Southern Carpathians endangered the entire group of German-Hungarian troops with a powerful flank attack. However, in mid-September, the German command managed to concentrate 27 divisions here, including 6 tank and motorized divisions, and restore a solid line of defense. Army Group "Southern Ukraine" on September 23 was transformed into Army Group "South". In the second half of September, stubborn battles continued in this sector, especially in Northern Transylvania.

Reinforcing its troops in the Cluj and Turda region with two tank divisions and two Hungarian mountain rifle brigades, the enemy organized powerful counterattacks against the 27th, 6th Guards Tank and 4th Romanian armies. The advance of the Soviet-Romanian troops in this direction stalled.

The situation on the left wing of the front was different. Here, the troops of the 53rd Army, in cooperation with the 1st Romanian Army, developing an offensive to the northwest, liberated the cities of Arad and Belyush and on September 22 reached the Romanian-Hungarian border. On September 23, formations of the 18th Tank Corps and the 243rd Rifle Division of Colonel N.N. Parfentiev, having entered the Hungarian land, occupied the village of Battonya, and three days later - the first Hungarian city - Mako.

So, in September, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front advanced in the west and north-west from 300 to 500 km, thwarted the plans of the German command to stabilize the front on the line of the Southern Carpathians, cleared part of Northern Transylvania from the enemy and reached the borders of Yugoslavia and Hungary. Their offensive was still carried out in close cooperation with the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the forces of the Black Sea Front and the Danube military flotilla, which at that time undertook a campaign to Bulgaria from Dobruja and the southeastern regions of Romania.

By October 5, two Romanian armies fought along with the Soviets - 23 divisions, a separate motorized regiment and an aviation corps. After October 16, 17 divisions remained in the Romanian troops at the front, which were poorly equipped and felt a lack of weapons and military equipment. The rest of the formations were assigned to the rear.

In October 1944, Romania was completely cleared of German troops. On October 25, units of the 40th Army of Zhmachenko and the 4th Romanian Army of General Avramescu liquidated the last strongholds of the enemy in the country - they expelled him from

the cities of Satu Mare and Carey.

About seven months, from the end of March 1944. The Red Army fought for the liberation of Romania. Of decisive importance in achieving this goal was the Jassy-Kishinev operation, during which 16 German divisions were destroyed. The liberation of Romania was achieved at the cost of great sacrifices. From March to October 1944, more than 286,000 Soviet soldiers shed their blood on Romanian soil, of which 69,000 died and went missing. During the fighting, the Soviet troops lost here 2083 guns and mortars, 2249 tanks and self-propelled guns, 528 aircraft. The losses of the Romanian troops in the fight against the Germans from August 23 to October 30 amounted to more than 58 thousand people killed, wounded and missing.

The capture of Romania and the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the borders of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Hungary predetermined the question of the imminent expulsion of German troops from all the Balkan countries.

BULGARIAN OPERATION

Bulgaria was a constitutional monarchy, in Soviet terminology,

was a "monarcho-fascist" state. For several decades, the royal court was associated with Germany, being its ally in the First World War. German capital played an important role in the economy of an agricultural country as a whole. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were established in 1934.

With the outbreak of World War II and the transfer of hostilities to the Mediterranean zone, all interested parties tried to strengthen their influence in the Balkans. Hitler in October 1940 invited Tsar Boris III to enter into the Tripartite Pact, promising support for Bulgarian territorial claims to Greece regarding Western Thrace, but Sofia was afraid to complicate relations with England, Turkey, Yugoslavia and the USSR. The Soviet government offered to conclude a mutual assistance treaty "which will help Bulgaria in the realization of her national aspirations not only in Western but also in Eastern Thrace" and organize the supply of weapons. At the same time, Soviet diplomacy, quickly accustomed to communicating in the language of secret protocols, repeatedly warned Berlin that it considered Bulgaria a "security zone of the USSR." England and the United States hoped to keep Bulgaria in a position of neutrality.

Hungary joined the Tripartite Pact on 20 November and Romania on 23 November. Everyone put pressure on Sofia. Hitler, who had already signed the directive for the invasion of Greece, which provided for the use of Bulgarian territory, promised to ensure that Bulgaria did not participate in the war. The Soviet Union regularly reminded that only it "is able to guarantee the security of Bulgaria" while maintaining "its current regime and meeting its historical demands." The Anglo-Americans strongly dissuaded them from accepting the Soviet proposals.

The Bulgarian leadership was well aware that rapprochement with England meant being drawn into the war, and rapprochement with the USSR was fraught with social changes. Tsar Boris, presumably, especially liked the hint at the possibility of preserving the "current regime". In this situation, entry into the Tripartite Pact in Sofia was considered the lesser of evils. On January 15, 1941, Germany agreed to satisfy Bulgarian demands for access to the Aegean Sea, and on January 20, Bulgaria decided to join the Tripartite Pact on the terms of non-intervention in the Anglo-German war and the maintenance by Germany of its troops on the Bulgarian

territory. However, under German pressure, on February 2, Sofia assumed the costs of maintaining Wehrmacht units, and on the same day a military agreement was signed, according to which the Bulgarian army was actually placed under German control.

On March 1, the Bulgarian government announced its accession to the Tripartite Pact, on the same day German troops entered the country, intended to invade Greece and Yugoslavia, and on March 5, England broke off diplomatic relations with Sofia. On April 6, the Wehrmacht launched an operation in the Balkans, which ended with the surrender of Yugoslavia on April 17 and Greece on April 23.

After the Balkan campaign, German troops were withdrawn from Bulgaria. The Bulgarian government did not declare war on the Soviet Union and did not join Germany at the time of its attack on the USSR. And although England and the United States were formally at war with Bulgaria, the Soviet Union did not fight with it, and a Bulgarian envoy was in Moscow and Kuibyshev throughout the war. The Germans used Bulgaria as a source of raw materials and a naval base on the Black Sea.

In the summer of 1943, after the death of Tsar Boris, the government appointed a regency council under the young heir to the throne, Simeon.

Since the summer of 1941, an active resistance movement began to unfold in the country. Since the presence of the Germans on the territory of Bulgaria did not have the character of an occupation, this movement was not essentially anti-fascist either. It was aimed at overthrowing the "reactionary" bourgeois-democratic regime,

changing the existing system and creating a new society according to the Soviet model. Naturally, the organizer and leader of the movement was the Bulgarian Workers' Party of Communists. The Communist Party called on the working people to fight against the "monarcho-fascist dictatorship", striving to involve the broadest possible masses of the people in the struggle. In June 1941, the first partisan detachment was formed, and already in April 1943, by decision of the Central Committee of the BRP, the Main Headquarters of the People's Liberation Insurgent Army was organized. The hardships of wartime, the ruin of the economy, the tightening of the police regime expanded the social base of the Resistance.

On April 17, 1944, the Soviet government presented a note that drew the attention of the Bulgarian government to the incompatibility of normal relations between the USSR and Bulgaria with such facts when, due to the ever worsening military situation in Germany, the port cities of Varna and Burgas were turned into German bases. During this period, they were actively used to evacuate troops from the Crimea. The Kremlin offered the Bulgarians to immediately stop the use of Bulgarian territory and ports by Germany against the Soviet Union. The only result of such a decision could only be the occupation of the country. In addition, the Soviet government expressed a desire to restore the Soviet consulate in Varna, as well as to establish consulates in Burgas and Ruse.

In a note dated May 18, the Soviet government noted that the Bulgarian government was "looking for pretexts to evade a direct proposal ... to open Soviet consulates in Bulgaria", and warned that without meeting these demands "it will consider it impossible to maintain relations with Bulgaria as with a state that helps and intends to help Hitler Germany in the future in the war against the Soviet Union.

The Bulgarian representatives stubbornly denied all the accusations, reminding them that they did not take part in the war against the USSR.

At the same time, the Bagryanov government that came to power was looking for the possibility of concluding peace with England and the United States: "The Bulgarian monarcho-fascists, fearing their people and the entry of the Red Army into Bulgaria, agreed to the occupation of the country

Anglo-American troops. However, these soundings did not lead to Bulgaria's withdrawal from the WAR.

By August 1944, the issue of consulates had lost its relevance; on August 12, in a new note, the question was posed directly and specifically: "If Bulgaria thinks of somehow breaking the deadlock, then at present the only question can be a break between Bulgaria and Germany." A week later, the triumphal offensive of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts began. Three days later, the government of Antonescu fell. The remnants of the German troops, defeated in Romania, retreated to Bulgarian territory. German ships and transport ships moved to Bulgarian ports.

On August 26, the Bagryanov government announced that Bulgaria, observing complete neutrality, in accordance with the Hague Convention, would disarm German troops who refused to leave its territory. The Bulgarian General Staff, with the knowledge of the government, officially clarified with the German command the procedure for the unhindered withdrawal of German troops from Bulgaria. So did the commander of the Bulgarian fleet, who did not take any action against the German ships in the Bulgarian ports. The Bulgarian government stubbornly did not want to fight with anyone. General Schneckenburger, who represented the German command in Bulgaria as "fictitious internment, which is understood as internment for an external effect."

The ruling circles of Bulgaria were much more afraid of the Soviet presence. In Bagryanov's secret report to the regent Prince Kirill on August 31, the head of government recommended that everything be done to prevent the entry of Soviet troops into Bulgarian soil. At the same time, he believed that it was necessary to continue

negotiations with representatives of England and the USA and in no case allow the "Bolshevization" of the country.

Further aggravation of the internal political crisis that arose in connection with the Red Army's advance to the country's borders led to the resignation of the Bagryanov government and the formation on September 2 of a new government headed by K. Muraviev, one of the right-wing leaders of the Bulgarian Agricultural People's Union. The new government, which lasted only seven days, denounced the Tripartite Pact, announced the evacuation of the Bulgarian expeditionary forces from the occupied regions of Greece and Yugoslavia, as well as its intention to speed up negotiations with England and the United States on a truce, released all political prisoners and prisoners of war of the allies, dissolved the political police. The break in relations with Germany was said to be carried out if the German troops in Bulgaria refused to disarm.

The government of the USSR considered this insufficient and on September 5 declared war on Bulgaria. With the declaration of war on Bulgaria by the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain were forced to stop political negotiations with its representatives. On September 6, the Bulgarian delegation in Cairo was informed that in the future they could only be conducted with the participation of the USSR.

"The declaration of war by the Soviet Union against the fascist government of Bulgaria did not cause any damage to the interests of the Bulgarian people. On the contrary, it was the decisive condition for his release." But the Bulgarian government managed to save its people from participation in the worldwide slaughter for five years, now it will have to take up arms.

The approach of the Red Army allowed the Bulgarian communists to proceed to the direct preparation of an armed uprising. On September 2, the Central Committee of the BRP decided to rouse the people to fight for the overthrow of the government and the establishment of the power of the Fatherland Front. By decision of the Sofia District Committee, a

an operational bureau for the armed protection of strikes and demonstrations envisaged by the plan for an uprising in the capital. It was planned to inflict the main blow on the Military Ministry by a combined detachment and military units that had gone over to the side of the Fatherland Front. By the beginning of the uprising, 11 partisan brigades and 38 detachments with a total number of 18 thousand people were operating in the country, and together with members of combat groups - up to 30 thousand people.

The main forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front by the beginning of September 1944 occupied the Romanian-Bulgarian border in the area from Giurgiu to Mangalia. The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, pursuing the retreating enemy, on September 6 reached the Romanian Yugoslav border in the Turnu Severin region and isolated from Bulgaria those German formations that were fighting in the Eastern Carpathians and Transylvania.

The strategic situation on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front allowed Tolbukhin's headquarters to prepare and carry out an operation to occupy Bulgaria in a short time. With the defeat of the Southern Ukraine Army Group, the enemy defense in Romania collapsed, and the German troops operating in Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece were isolated from the Carpathian-Transylvanian group defending in the northwestern part of Romania and Hungary.

Bulgaria had an army with a total strength of 450 thousand people. It consisted of five combined arms armies and two expeditionary corps - a total of 22 divisions and 7 brigades. Nine divisions and two cavalry brigades were in occupation service in Yugoslavia and Greece. When their withdrawal to Bulgaria began, German troops attacked them and disarmed some units. Their control was lost. Most of the remaining formations were stationed south of the Balkan Range. In the northeastern part of the country, where the actions of the 3rd Ukrainian

front, there were 4 divisions. In the Black Sea ports of Varna, Burgas and in the Danube port of Ruse (Rushchuk) there were German and Bulgarian ships. The total number of German troops in Bulgaria, taking into account the units withdrawn from Romania, at the end of August was estimated at 30 thousand people.

The German command sought to maintain its position in Bulgaria. It was guided by the instructions of Hitler, who on July 31, 1944, in a conversation with General Jodl, said that "without Bulgaria, we are practically completely unable to ensure calm in the Balkans." At the end of August, the German ambassador to Bulgaria A. Bekerle told the regents that the German troops did not intend to leave Bulgaria in the near future. The leadership of the Reich hatched plans for organizing a coup d'etat in Bulgaria and coming to power as head of government of the leader of the Bulgarian fascists A. Tsankov, intended to transfer German troops from Yugoslavia to Bulgaria.

On September 5, on the day of the declaration of war on Bulgaria, the Soviet Stavka approved the plan for the Bulgarian operation, developed by the Military Council of the 3rd Ukrainian Front with the participation of Marshal Zhukov, a representative of the Stavka. In the course of it, Tolbukhin's troops were to reach the line of Dzhurdzhu, Karnobat, Burgas, capture the ports of Varna and Burgas, capture the enemy fleet and liberate the coastal part of Bulgaria. Their advance was planned to a depth of 210 km.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front had about 258 thousand people, 5583 guns and mortars, 508 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1026 combat aircraft in the 46th, 57th and 37th armies. For operations in the southern part of Dobruja in the direction of Aytos, Burgas, all his forces were concentrated - 28 rifle divisions, 2 mechanized corps and the 17th air army. To support the offensive in this direction, three assault air divisions of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were also involved.

The Black Sea Fleet was supposed to block Varna and Burgas, with the approach of the mobile troops of the front, land an amphibious assault and, together with them, take possession of these ports. The Danube flotilla, transferred on August 30 to the operational subordination of Tolbukhin, was supposed to capture all enemy watercraft on the Danube in the area of the port of Ruse, cover the actions of the ground forces from possible attacks by his ships and, in cooperation with the 46th army, seize the port.

The absence of a pre-prepared defense, the low density of the Bulgarian troops and the almost complete confidence of the Soviet command that they would not resist, made it possible not to plan the artillery and air preparation for the offensive. It was decided to start the offensive by advancing advanced mobile detachments in columns, following them in an hour to advance the vanguard regiments of the divisions of the first echelon of the corps, and then the main forces of all three combined arms armies.

The front command attached particular importance to the rapid liberation of Varna and Burgas, since this would deprive the enemy of the last bases on the Black Sea and inevitably lead to the death of his fleet. "The decisive offensive of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front was supposed to cause panic and confusion among the ruling circles of Bulgaria and be a signal for the start of a popular armed uprising."

On September 8, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front crossed the Romanian-Bulgarian border with forward detachments, and an hour and a half later - with the main forces. Without firing a shot, they rapidly advanced along their routes in a southwestern direction. The first reports of the commanders of regiments and divisions left no doubt that the Bulgarian army would not resist the Soviet troops. The population enthusiastically welcomed the Red Army. Given this, Stalin instructed the Bulgarian troops not to disarm. By the end of the first day of the operation, the mobile troops of the front advanced up to 70 km and reached the Ruse-Varna line. At dawn 8

September, the main forces of the amphibious assault landed in the port of Varna, and at 13 o'clock in the port of Burgas - a detachment of about 4,000 people. Before that, an airborne assault was thrown into Burgas.

On the evening of September 8, the Headquarters clarified the task of the troops of the front, ordering the next day to advance in the direction of Burgas and Aytos, take possession of them and reach the line of Ruse, Razgrad, Targovishte, Karnobat. Carrying out this task, mobile formations on September 9 advanced up to 120 km.

With the entry of Soviet troops into the territory of Bulgaria, the Muraviev government declared war on Germany, but on September 9 it was overthrown. The government of the Fatherland Front, headed by Kimon Georgiev, came to power, which turned to the USSR with a request for a truce. On the same day, the new government issued an order for the arrest of the regents and all members of the old governments that pursued a "pro-German, anti-people policy." The leaders of the foreign leadership of the Communist Party hastened to Sofia from Moscow.

In connection with these events, the Stavka sent a new directive to Tolbukhin on September 9 at 19:00. It said: "In view of the fact that the Bulgarian government broke off relations with the Germans and declared war on Germany and asks the Soviet government to start negotiations on an armistice, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, in accordance with the instructions of the State Defense Committee, orders to complete the operation to occupy the population planned according to the plan by 9 pm on September 9 points and from 22 hours on September 9 with. d. stop hostilities

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Bulgaria, firmly entrenched in that strip of Bulgaria, which is occupied by our troops.

On the same day, Stalin signed the order: "The operations of our troops in Bulgaria were launched because the Bulgarian government did not want to break off its relations with Germany and gave shelter to the German armed forces on the territory of Bulgaria. As a result of the successful actions of our troops, the goal of military operations was achieved: Bulgaria severed its relations with Germany and declared war on her. Thus, Bulgaria ceased to be the bulwark of German imperialism in the Balkans, which it had been for the past thirty years.

Anti-Bulgarian actions followed from Germany. The concentration of German troops on the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border began. The northwestern regions of the country, and especially the area of Sofia, were not protected from possible attacks by the ground forces of Army Group F and enemy aircraft. The possibility of an invasion of Bulgaria under some pretext by Turkish troops from Eastern Thrace was also not ruled out. The Soviet troops stopped 300 km from Sofia and 360-400 km from the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border.

On the evening of September 9, Georgy Dimitrov, who was in Moscow, asked the Soviet command to receive an authorized delegation of the new government at the headquarters of the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

On September 10, General Tolbukhin received a delegation headed by D. Ganev, a member of the Politburo of the CPB. She informed the front command about the armed uprising, the political platform of the Fatherland Front government and its desire to conclude a truce with the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition as soon as possible and asked for military assistance. The Soviet side granted the last request immediately.

September 12 Tolbukhin was awarded the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

On September 13, the Headquarters instructed to send the Chief of Staff of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, General of the SS, to Sofia. Biryuzov to guide the actions of the Soviet troops and organize interaction with the Bulgarian army through the General Staff of Bulgaria. At the same time, it was ordered to advance the 34th Rifle Corps to the Sofia region and relocate part of the forces of the 17th Air Army there. September 15 Soviet

troops entered Sofia, three days later they took up positions northwest and southwest of the city, saddling the roads leading to the capital.

On September 17, the Bulgarian army entered the operational subordination of the Soviet command. September 20 was followed by a directive from the Stavka on the transfer of troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front to the western and southern regions of the country. The troops of the 57th Army, having made a 500-kilometer march, reached the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border by the end of September. The 37th Army and the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps by that time were concentrated in the areas of Kazanlak, Nova Zagora, Yambol. This reliably ensured the left wing of the front and the security of the southern regions of Bulgaria. The main forces of the Bulgarians were concentrated in the direction of Sofia, Nish for subsequent actions on the left flank of Tolbukhin.

With the liberation of Bulgaria and the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the border with Yugoslavia, more favorable conditions were created for the defeat of the Wehrmacht on the territory of Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania.

During the occupation, that is, the liberation, of Bulgaria, the Red Army lost only 154 people dead and 514 wounded, another 11,773 soldiers suffered from dysentery.

On October 28, 1944, the USSR, Great Britain and the USA signed with Bulgaria

Armistice agreement.

"As a result of the seventh strike, the Moldavian SSR was liberated, Germany's allies, Romania and Bulgaria, were put out of action, and they declared war on it. The Soviet Army received ample opportunities for an offensive in Hungary, the Balkans and for deep coverage of the fascist troops from the south.

The Soviet strategy demonstrated the skillful choice of the direction of the main attacks of the two interacting fronts, the skillful organization of operations to encircle large enemy groupings with their subsequent destruction, and the creation of favorable prerequisites for the ninth Stalin strike in the future.

In our literature, the actions of the Red Army in Romania and Bulgaria are stubbornly referred to as "Liberation" and the "price of the liberation mission" is calculated. Since we are talking about the occupation by troops during the war of the territory of sovereign states hostile to the Soviet Union, it would be more correct to speak of their occupation and replacement of the existing system. Moreover, Soviet troops continued to remain here after the war for another fourteen years, continuing to "liberate" the Romanian and Bulgarian peoples from "reactionary capitalist governments" and controlling the process of establishing "truly 'people's democratic' - communist regimes in the Balkans.

Step by step, all the recipes for "Sovietization" and the theory of class struggle were used. First, the old state machine was broken down, the "police-fascist" parliament was dissolved, the state apparatus and the army were purged, the police were disbanded, "fascist" newspapers were closed, and printing houses were confiscated. The institute of assistant commanders for political affairs was introduced in the army.

parts.

It was soon announced that the Sofia People's Court would try 653 people for fascist activities, including 126 former ministers and members of parliament. This was just the beginning.

The presence of the Red Army on Bulgarian territory "favored the further development of the revolution in Bulgaria in 1944-1947." in the image and likeness of the Bolshevik revolution, up to the physical liquidation of the representatives of the dynasty. Communist terror unfolded in Bulgaria, were destroyed

thousands of representatives of the propertied classes, the "reactionary" intelligentsia and officers, almost all members of the royal family were executed, including the minor tsar.

In the first government of the Fatherland Front, out of sixteen ministers, there were only four communists. But the Communist Party had real power. As it strengthened, the "bourgeois elements" disappeared from the government, and behind the "elements" and the parties they represented. Further, everything went according to a well-known scenario: the liquidation of the classes guilty of the proletariat, the cleansing of the party itself from various deviations and their carriers, the creation of a commission to identify agents and provocateurs, the fight against spies and enemies of the people, the adoption of the five-year plan, the course towards the construction of socialism, the personality cult of Stalin and his "smaller brother" Vylko Chervenkov...

Comintern veteran Georgy Dimitrov, speaking at the Party Congress, directly pointed out that the power of the Bulgarian communists rests on Soviet bayonets: "On September 9, 1944, political power in our country was wrested from the hands of the capitalist bourgeoisie, the exploiting monarcho-fascist minority

and passed into the hands of the vast majority of the people, the working people of town and country, with the active and leading role of the working class and its communist vanguard... , then this is explained not only by the decisive measures of the people's power, the vigilance and energy of our party, but also to a large extent by the presence in the country of units of the Soviet Liberation Army, which, by the very fact of their presence, to a certain extent, fettered the actions of the reaction.

In Romania, due to the fact that the number of communists in the country did not exceed one thousand people, the process of "democratization" developed somewhat more slowly, but also in the right direction. And here the presence of the Red Army "restrained the forces of reaction and thereby favored the development of the revolution ... It created the necessary conditions and prerequisites for the subsequent defeat of the ruling classes of landlords and capitalists ..."

At the first stage, when the main problem was the speedy withdrawal of Romania from the war, the Soviet government did not raise any objections to the composition of the new government of Romania, formed from representatives of the four main political parties. The Communists and Social Democrats were represented in it by two ministers without portfolios. It soon became clear that Prime Minister Sanatescu was a "reactionary general" and that the members of the government were "proteges of big business and landlords." They brazenly demanded the disarmament of proletarian detachments who did not want to serve in the army and were carrying out a "revolutionary seizure" of state institutions and enterprises in the localities. The Romanian Communist Party could not put up with such a situation, and the Allied Control Commission could not but support it. As early as November 4, the commission, through Romanian newspapers, expressed dissatisfaction with the progress in fulfilling the terms of the Armistice Agreement. After the memorandum was published, the Sanatescu government resigned. A new government was formed, but the "reactionary majority", not infected with Bolshevism, prevailed in it, and Sanatescu again became prime minister.

A member of the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian Front reported indignantly to the Politburo: "The state apparatus is not being purged of reactionary elements... Several dozen newspapers are published in Bucharest, over which only partial control has been established. The same situation is in radio broadcasting, publishing, entertainment enterprises, etc. etc."

In order to "struggle for democratic transformations and the peaceful development of the revolution," the Communists, Social Democrats, the Farmers' Front and the united trade unions created the National Democratic Front.

On December 2, after mass demonstrations organized by the front in Bucharest, having existed for less than a month, the second government fell. He was replaced by the cabinet of General N. Radescu, which turned out to be "no less reactionary", although the number of NDF representatives in it increased. In February 1945, mass demonstrations were organized in a number of cities demanding the resignation of the Radescu government and a series of provocations were organized with shooting at demonstrators (of course, some "reactionaries" shot at the people, and right from the windows of the royal palace!). The Soviet military authorities announced that they could not allow such a tense situation to exist in the rear of the Red Army, the newspaper Pravda published an article in which it was unequivocally emphasized that "General Radescu is pursuing a policy that is in many ways similar to the fascist dictatorship of Antonescu." Representatives of the People's Democratic Front on February 27 demanded the resignation of the cabinet.

Finally, on March 2, the king was forced to entrust the formation of a new "government of the concentration of democratic forces" to the chairman of the Front of Landowners, Pyotr Groza, who was one of the leaders of the NDF. Further

things went easier, since the communists themselves assert that: "If we talk about the class essence of power in Romania after March 6, 1945, about the real correlation of the classes that fought in the country, then it was a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." In the shortest possible time, a law was adopted on the implementation of agrarian reform, the dissolution of the "reactionary Senate", the closure of "pro-fascist newspapers", the creation of a unicameral parliament and the holding of elections.

Using the "military-administrative resource", the material assistance of the USSR, the dissatisfaction of the people with the former state structures that led the country to military defeat, promising land, democratic reforms and an increase in living standards, the CPR and its partners in the left bloc in November 1946 received 84% of the electoral mandates. On December 30, 1947, "at the request of the masses," King Mihai abdicated the throne. By decision of the Parliament, the Romanian People's Republic was proclaimed. After the destruction of the monarchy and the expulsion of the king in February 1948, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party merged into the single and only Romanian Workers' Party in the country. The remaining political associations and organizations, as accomplices of fascism and imperialism, engaged in "anti-people sabotage activities", were liquidated in the course of political trials and repressions against their leaders and activists.

The further path of the country copies the historical experience of the Bolsheviks: nationalization, the struggle against cosmopolitanism, "for the purity of the ranks" in the party, the defeat of the "right deviation", the persecution of the intelligentsia, forced industrialization, the cooperation of the peasants, the cultural revolution, the construction of the "foundations of socialism" on the basis of a planned economy.

"We sing glory, glory to Stalin and we go forward along his path."

All this time, "the organs of the Soviet military command were still vigilantly guarding the interests of the Soviet Union." Romania remained the "rear" of the Red Army until 1958.

Instead of the "brown plague" Eastern Europe was inoculated with "red fever". Comparing Stalin and Hitler, Professor Trevor-Roper noted: "Sometimes it is believed that Hitler and Stalin are fundamentally opposite phenomena, one extreme right dictator, the other extreme left. This is wrong. Both, in essence, although in different ways, aspired to the same power based on the same classes and supported by the same methods. And if they fought and insulted each other, they did so not as incompatible political antipodes, but as well-chosen rivals. They admired, studied, and envied each other's methods; their common hatred was directed against the Western civilization of the twentieth century, which

both openly wanted to destroy."

It is characteristic that all this "people's power" like a house of cards collapsed simultaneously with the Soviet Union. The completely bankrupt "national communism" in Romania, which remained impoverished after all the social and economic experiments, ended in 1989 with the execution of the Ceausescu couple.

EIGHTH STALIN IMPACT

"... a strategic offensive operation in order to defeat the German troops in the Baltic and complete

liberation of the Baltic republics.

The struggle for the Baltic was long and extremely fierce. It began in February 1944 and ended only in May 1945.

After the ineffective spring offensive of the Red Army from the border of the Narva River and the eastern approaches to Pskov, Ostrov, Idritsa and Polotsk, a pause was established on all fronts operating here, which lasted until July 1944.

The Germans had a fairly large grouping of troops in the Baltics, had a well-developed road network that allowed them to actively maneuver the available forces and means along internal communications, created a deep multi-lane defense, and enjoyed the mass support of the local population. The defense had four main nodes: Narva, Pskov, Ostrovsky and Riga. For actions against each of them, the Soviet command created a separate front.

The frequent change of commanders, the shuffling of personnel in general were characteristic of the Stalinist style of leadership. But the second half of 1943 - the first half of 1944 is characterized by a real leapfrog in the military hierarchy and organization. Fronts were created, disbanded and re-created, sometimes in the same place and with the same tasks, but with new leadership. Often, without any military necessity, front-line departments and headquarters moved from north to south and back, commanders jumped from position to position. In a new place, it was necessary to re-study the theater of the enemy, its own troops, but almost always there was not enough time for this, since new appointments and reorganizations, as a rule, were associated with the elimination of previous shortcomings and the preparation of new operations. All this undoubtedly had a negative effect on the organization of hostilities, and the sharply increased number of fronts as a result of the splitting of forces produced a mass of rear bureaucracy (in July 1944, there were more than 9,000 general posts in the states), the growth of whose ranks did not in the least affect the improvement in the supply of troops.

So, on October 10, 1943, by the decision of the Headquarters, the Bryansk Front, which had reached the Sozh River and was planning an operation in the Rogachev direction, was liquidated. The Front Department, headed by General Popov, transferred troops to the neighbors and went to Velikiye Luki to form the Baltic (aka the 2nd Baltic Front). On the other hand, the headquarters of the North-Western Front, disbanded on November 20, moved from Velikiye Luki to the region of southern Polesie to head the 2nd Belorussian Front, created on February 17, 1944. This front was liquidated on April 5 and restored again on April 24, but with a different commander.

On February 15, as already mentioned, the Volkhov Front ceased to exist,

operating in the Pskov-Ostrov direction. His armies came under the control of the Leningrad Front, and the headquarters with General Meretskov departed for Karelia. Literally a month later, it turned out that "a mistake was made": the Leningrad Front operated with seven armies in four important operational directions - from the Karelian Isthmus to Novorzhev - and could not succeed in any of them. Therefore, on April 21, a front was again created in the Pskov-Ostrov direction - the 3rd Baltic. General A.I. Eremenko for the first half of 1944 was the commander of three front-line associations. General I.E. Petrov during the same time managed to lead the Separate Primorsky Army, the 33rd Army and the 2nd Belorussian Front.

As General Sandalov recalls, in response to his bewildered question, why drag the entire bulky front command apparatus from the central direction to the north,

"A responsible officer of the Headquarters" said instructively: "It's time for you, Leonid Mikhailovich, to know that the reasons for such rearrangements do not always have to be sought in their operational expediency." It is time for us to understand that often military decisions and personnel changes in the Red Army were the results of apparatus games, dictated by career considerations and ambitions of various groups. Any, even the most erroneous decision was presented to the people as confirmation of the wisdom and insight of the top leadership.

Already in the summer of 1944, the Personnel Administration was horrified at the thought of where to put the abyss of generals after the war. General Golikov reported: "The requirements for the assignment of new and new general ranks do not stop and do not weaken. They are especially great in the line of service of the rear of the Red Army (at the same time they are the most restrained in the line of the army in the field and the combined arms line). This is most clearly manifested on the part of the Logistics Directorate, where the desire to produce as many generals as possible and raise them to the highest rank is clearly expressed.

Already now there are 326 generals in the rear service, which is 11.04% of the total.

And what generals! Golikov cites some of the most odious cases:

"1. Head of the administrative and economic department Polenov V.V. It was only on December 20, 1942 that he received the rank of major general. He served in the Red Army for only 6 years and 5 months, of which one year as a private, 5 years as a military commissar of the financial department and 5 months as head of the administrative and economic department of an NPO. He has no military education. He could successfully still be fully in the rank of "colonel of the quartermaster service." There is no such rapid movement in ranks even in the Army in the field.

2. Head of the Department of the Base of the NPO Center Azizbekov A.M. in the Red Army for only 8 months, he has absolutely no experience, no military education, no length of service in the army.

3. Head of the 1st Department of the Quartermaster's Office Chistyakov V.A. Although he has been in the army since 1918, his entire service since 1920 has been held only in the military and economic department of the NPO, in clerical positions, starting with a junior clerk in a position not higher than a major lieutenant colonel, and now he holds the position not of a general, but only the colonel. Since 1920, not a single month of service in the troops ... "

Of the almost three thousand Soviet commanders in the ranks of generals, a little more than a third were directly in the troops.

And there were much more order bearers in the rear than on the front line. General Shtemenko, having arrived on the 2nd Belorussian Front, immediately noted: "... it was striking that there were almost complete absence of people with government awards in combat units. Orders and medals were not received even by those of the soldiers, sergeants and commanders

platoons, companies and battalions that fought from the first day of the war, more than once showed heroism and had several wounds. But in the rear of the awarded, there was a bit too much. But on the chest of the Zhukovsky military field friend, ten orders and medals fit.

A highly experienced staff officer who headed the apparatus of armies, directions and fronts throughout the war, Colonel General A.P. Pokrovsky, in a jubilee collection dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation of Belarus, noted: "If at the beginning of the war we had four fronts, then in the summer of 1944 there were already more than ten. Some

fronts arose as a result of the expansion of the common front of struggle, and therefore their appearance is natural. However, the formation of a number of front departments is questionable. Their education required a large number of qualified commanders, rear units and institutions, communications and security units. In addition, an extremely limited time was allotted for organizing and putting together a new administration, which, naturally, had a negative impact on the leadership of the troops. The appearance of fronts with a small number of troops introduced a significant change in the concept of their purpose as operational-strategic organisms. These changes were automatically reflected in the armies, which turned from operational formations into operational-tactical, and sometimes even simply tactical. All this had a negative effect on the command and control of the troops. Even this small private remark was knocked out of the general chorus of the oratorio on the topic of the infallibility of leadership, and the editors of the collection - civil shtafirs, but, naturally, doctors and candidates - without delving into the essence of the issue, hastened to give a footnote: "The judgments of the author of the article on this issue are not presented indisputable."

Pokrovsky's judgments directly concern the northwestern direction, where four fronts acted against the three German army groupings of the North Army Group in the summer of 1944, and for each German corps, which consisted mainly of three divisions, there was one Soviet army, which had an average of 8- 9 rifle divisions, tank or mechanized corps, 3-4 tank and self-propelled artillery regiments. Here General Shtemenko understood well that the 3rd Baltic Front was not an "operational-strategic organism", Govorov and his headquarters simply could not cope with the leadership of a large mass of troops: "Creating a new front association, we perfectly understood that it did not have great prospects. The sea stretched 400 kilometers in front of him. But even within such a range of action, he had to solve very significant operational tasks.

The Soviet Headquarters returned to the issue of the Baltic states during Operation Bagration. In early July 1944, north of the Daugava, on a front of more than 650 km, the North Army Group, which included the 16th and 18th armies and the Narva task force, was defending - about 38 divisions in total. Using the features of the area, abundant in forests and rivers, the German command created a strong defense to a depth of 200 km. However, the position of the "North" group was complicated by the successes of the Soviet troops in Karelia and Belarus. The German command was forced to transfer the 122nd Infantry Division from the Narva Task Force to help the Finns; the rapid advance of the Red Army in Belarus led to a deep coverage of the entire right wing of the group and made it necessary to send the 12th Panzer and 212th Infantry Divisions to Army Group Center. The situation in the Daugavpils region was unfavorable, where there was a real threat of cutting off Army Group North.

Units of the 2nd shock and 8th armies of the Leningrad Front, as well as troops of the 3rd Baltic Front as part of the 42nd, 67th, 1st shock

And

54th Army and troops of the 2nd Baltic Front - 10th Guards, 3rd shock and 22nd

i am army. To the south of the Daugava, the 4th shock and 6th guards armies of the 1st Baltic Front were advancing. They numbered 75 infantry divisions, | | tank corps, a significant number of tank, artillery, engineering and other units. Each front had one air army.

In order to liberate the Baltic states and assist the troops developing the offensive in Belarus, the Headquarters decided to launch active offensive operations north of the Daugava. July 4 in front of the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front under

under the command of General Eremenko, she set the task of defeating the enemy grouping in the Idritsa, Sebez, Drissa area and capturing the Rezekne, Daugavpils line. In the future, they were to advance on Riga and, in cooperation with Bagramyan's front, cut the communications connecting the enemy's Baltic grouping with Germany. Front Eremenko dealt two blows: one - on the right wing, bypassing Idritsa from the north, the other - on the left, in the direction of Daugavpils.

Two days later, the 3rd Baltic Front, Colonel General I.I., received the task. Maslennikov. The troops of his right wing were to defeat the Pskov-Ostrov group, reach the line of Ostrov, Gulbene and occupy Pskov. Subsequently, the front was supposed to liberate Tartu, Pärnu and cut off the enemy in the Narva region. The left wing of the front was to cut the Rezekne Island railway, then liberate the Gulbene region. This was supposed to lead to the curtailment of the enemy's defense in the Ostrov region and to the north of it.

On June 21, the Headquarters approved the decision of the commander of the Leningrad Front to launch an offensive on the Narva Isthmus from July 24.

Troops of the 2nd Baltic Front, General of the Army A.I. Eremenko had 31 rifle divisions, 2 fortified areas, 4 rifle and 3 separate tank brigades, 6 tank and self-propelled artillery regiments and the 5 tank corps - 232 thousand soldiers and commanders, about 600 tanks.

10 infantry divisions of the 2nd and 10th Army Corps and the 6th SS Volunteer Corps were defending in front of the front, the backbone of which was the 15th and 19th Latvian Waffen Grenadier Divisions. The total number of enemy troops was estimated at 72 thousand people, 1299 guns and mortars, 130 tanks and assault guns.

General Eremenko decided to deliver the main blow with the forces of the 10th Guards Army, Lieutenant General M.I. Kazakov and the 3rd shock army, Lieutenant General V.A. Yushkevich in the general direction on Rezekne. On the left flank of the 22nd Army, Lieutenant General G.P. Korotkov, which included the 130th Latvian Rifle Corps, and the 4th shock army of Lieutenant General P.F. Malysheva, transferred from the 1st Baltic Front - it included the 16th Lithuanian division - were to advance on Daugavpils.

The presence of national units in the composition of the Baltic fronts had a purely political significance. They were usually protected until they entered their "native" territory. Marshal Bagramyan recalls how he received the 16th Lithuanian division with the corresponding instructions from the Supreme Commander: "... to bring the Lithuanians into battle only with the entry of troops into the territory of Lithuania" and transferred the division to operational subordination to General Malyshev "without the right to enter it into battle." The Latvian Corps under the command of Major General D.K. Brandkalna included the 308th and 43rd Guards Divisions. However, the question of how many Latvians actually were in them is unclear, since the bulk of the soldiers in them were represented by all the nationalities of the country. So, the head of the political department of the 43rd Guards Division reported to the political department of the front:

"In the 2nd rifle company of the 121st Guards Rifle Regiment, a song was heard that was sung in turn in Tatar, Latvian, Russian

and Jewish, and the chorus was sung by the whole company in Russian.

To develop success in the 4th shock zone, it was planned to introduce the 5th tank corps of Major General M.G. into the breakthrough. Sakhno - 260 tanks and self-propelled guns. Despite the fact that the troops had to operate in a rugged wooded

swampy terrain, the optimist Eremenko set the armies the task of overcoming 80-90 km on the first day and encircling the enemy grouping in the Sebezhe region.

The operation was provided by the 15th Air Army of Lieutenant General N.F. Naumenko, which had 546 combat aircraft.

The heavy fighting that unfolded near Daugavpils held back the advance of Bagramyan's front, which posed a threat to his right wing. So the deadlines were rushed.

On July 10, the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front went on the offensive. Having broken the resistance of the enemy, Eremenko's armies broke through the line of his defense on a 150-kilometer front in two days and advanced 35 km. On July 13, Yushkevich's army finally recaptured the "ill-fated" Idritsa. On the same day, on the left wing, Malyshev's troops captured Drissa and rushed to Daugavpils. On July 15, after heavy and bloody battles, the city of Opochka was cleared of the Germans, two days later the 3rd shock and 22nd armies stormed Sebezhe.

On July 16, 1944, at the Olkhovka-Velikiy Bor line, units of the 130th Rifle Corps "were the first to enter the land of Latvia." Numerous "spontaneous rallies" were immediately held, at which "Latvian political workers warmly talked about the fact that the hour of the complete liberation of their native land was approaching and the Latvian people would regain their happiness, freedom and independence, joining as an equal member in the family of peoples of the world's first socialist state".

The troops of the 2nd Baltic Front, having broken through five defensive lines, advanced westward up to 90 km, and approached the Luban lowland. On July 23, they occupied Ludza, where the leadership of the Communist Party and the government of Soviet Latvia were immediately located, and on July 27 they captured Rezekne and, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front, they drove the Germans out of Daugavpils.

General Eremenko reported to the Headquarters on the destruction of more than 60 thousand enemy soldiers and 6600 taken prisoner. The losses of the front in the Rezhitsa-Dvina operation amounted to 12,880 people killed and 45,115 wounded.

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front - 258 thousand people, 4432 guns and mortars, 591 rocket launchers, 189 tanks - were preparing to break through the Panther line at the Pskov-Ostrov line. The main blow was delivered by the adjacent flanks of the 1st shock army of Lieutenant General N.D. Zakhvatayev and the 54th Army, Lieutenant General S.V. Roginsky, bypassing the most powerful Ostrovsky fortified area in the general direction to Balvy, Gulbene. The troops of the right wing and the center at the first stage of the operation were to use active actions, that is, frontal attacks, to pin down the enemy, preventing him from transferring forces to the breakthrough site. To oversee the actions of the front commander, Stalin sent General Shtemenko, who for the first time received the status of a representative of the Headquarters.

The front was opposed by 12 infantry, airfield and security divisions of the 28th, 38th and 50th army corps. The enemy was not particularly numerous, but he had been on the defensive for a long time.

On July 11-16, the 54th Army, using the success of the troops of the neighboring 2nd Baltic Front, destroyed enemy cover groups on the eastern bank of the Velikaya River and captured a bridgehead on the other side.

On July 17, the troops of the shock group of the front went on the offensive. In two days they broke through the defenses of the 50th German Army Corps on the front up to 70 km and advanced 40 km in depth. On July 21, the 67th Army of General

Lieutenant V.Z. Romanovsky. She broke through the long-term enemy defenses in the Ostrov direction and, with the assistance of the 1st Shock Army, stormed the city of Ostrov, the strongest stronghold on the way to the central regions of the Baltic. The Pskov grouping of the enemy was under the threat of a bypass. Using the general success, the troops of the 42nd Army, Lieutenant General V.P. Sviridov on July 22 began hostilities to capture Pskov and the next day, together with parts of the Romanovsky army, they cleared the city of the invaders.

After the liberation of Ostrov and Pskov and the entry of the troops of the right wing to the western bank of the Velikaya River, the front received the task of developing an offensive with the main forces on Valga with access to the rear of the Tartu and Narva enemy groupings. In this regard, the main efforts were transferred to the zone of the 1st shock army, which was transferred to part of the forces of the 54th army. Overcoming increasing resistance, Maslennikov's troops reached the line east of Gulbene, Aluksne, Petseri, and here they were stopped at the enemy's new defensive line - the Marienburg line.

The losses of the front amounted to 33,584 people killed and wounded.

Two armies of the Leningrad Front - 136 thousand people, supported by more than 1000 guns, including caliber 203 and 305 mm - began the third battle for Narva. The idea of the operation was to simultaneously strike from the north across the Narva River by the forces of the 2nd shock army of General Fedyuninsky and from the south, from the Narva bridgehead, by the 8th Army of Lieutenant General F.N. Starikov to go to the rear of the enemy grouping, surround and defeat it, then - Tallinn and Tartu.

Since the beginning of 1944, the Narva Task Force has been defending on the isthmus, consisting of five infantry divisions and the 3rd SS Panzer Corps, which included the 11th Motorized Division Nordland, created from foreign volunteers of Aryan origin (Danes, Finns, Dutch and other Swedes), the Panzergrenadier Brigade "Netherlands" and the 20th Estonian Waffen Grenadier Division. All this gave reason to call the fighting around Narva the "Battle of the European SS". They had quite enough time to create a multi-lane defense with a developed system of trenches and communications, a large number of long-term firing points.

The Soviet offensive began as planned on 24 July. The troops of the 8th Army were the first to strike. Their advance in a northwestern direction created a threat to the enemy's withdrawal routes and forced the German command to begin withdrawing its troops from Narva. In this regard, on the morning of July 25, Fedyuninsky's army went on the offensive. Its formations, with the powerful support of artillery and aviation, as well as ships of the Baltic Fleet and coastal batteries, crossed Narva, captured the western bank of the river, and by the morning of the next day liberated the city of Narva. Having advanced another 20 km to the west, on July 30, the Soviet troops were stopped by the enemy at a new line - Tannenberg. Outflanking him was impossible.

Soviet losses by July 30 - the official end date of the offensive - are estimated at 23,287 killed and wounded. However, the frontal attacks of the German defense continued until 10 August.

On July 27, the Headquarters ordered the Baltic fronts to deliver decisive blows to Army Group North, the directions of the blows remained the same.

The 2nd Baltic Front without a pause began the so-called Madona operation at the junction of the 18th and 16th German armies. The armies of Eremenko had to break through the wooded and swampy Luban lowland, replete with swamps, small reservoirs and streams and, providing themselves from the north,

advance in the general direction of Riga. At the same time, the 4th shock army was selected from the front, which was transferred to the western bank of the Daugava and again entered the

order of Bagramyan's headquarters. In a telephone conversation with the General Staff, Sandalov proposed, instead of reinforcing Bagramyan's troops with one army, to move the main forces of the 2nd Baltic Front beyond the Daugava and, together with him, develop an offensive against Riga from the west and south. In this case, one would not have to climb into the swamps and break through the enemy's fortified lines: "You are not the first to make such a proposal," Antonov replied, "but the Supreme Commander does not agree. He believes that, firstly, with such a decision, the force of the strike on the Riga grouping will be weakened. Secondly, it is too late to transfer now. And besides ... - Antonov made a short pause, as if choosing the right words, - we must also take into account the fact that the First Baltic made the ski track to Riga ...

After these words, there was no point in continuing the conversation. And we on it finished."

The combat sector of the 4th shock army was taken over by the 22nd army. A dividing line of fronts was established along the Daugava River. General Eremenko, armed with the slogan: "No matter how difficult the natural barriers, the Soviet soldier will be able to overcome them," he moved his remaining three armies along the shortest distance to Riga.

But their progress was slow. The troops, in the words of Sandalov, "swarmed in the swamps", overcoming 5-6 km per day.

"Having been drawn into the swamps, they were forced to wade, knee-deep, or even deeper, in the marshy swamp, to travel long distances in complete impassability. At times it was impossible even to make a halt so that people could rest. Rusty water stood all around and sucked in the quagmire. Carrying out heavy detours, often for tens of kilometers, the soldiers dragged machine guns, mortars and ammunition on their shoulders. People fell from exhaustion and fell asleep at the first opportunity" ("Fight for the Soviet Baltic in the Great Patriotic War. 1941-1945"). According to General Chistyakov, the water in the local swamps was deeper, and there were even more mosquitoes than in his native Kalinin region.

Only on August 7, having crossed the Aiviekste River with improvised means, did the troops of the front advance 50-60 km and completed the "forcing" of the Luban lowland. On August 13, the 10th Guards Army, with a simultaneous attack from three directions, captured the city and the railway station of Madona.

Marshal Eremenko believed that he greatly enriched military science with this: "Fighting ... showed that battles in swamp conditions are fought mainly for roads, dams, bulk crossings through swamps, on which the enemy usually creates resistance nodes. The main method of struggle is the infiltration of rifle units with 82-mm mortars through the swamps with the task of unexpected blows from the rear to assist units conducting a frontal offensive in seizing roads and disrupting the enemy's planned withdrawal. Our strategist only does not explain why it was necessary to "seep" three armies with heavy weapons and a tank corps into the bargain through the swamp for ten days (although by this time General Sakhno had 81 tanks left), when, according to his headquarters, "defense at first, only the 19th Latvian SS division held in the Luban lowland.

The former commander of the 10th Guards Army, General Kazakov, does not hide his skepticism: "It was difficult to imagine a more difficult zone for the offensive of the troops ... Only small enemy detachments acted against us, and, to tell the truth, we then thought more about overcoming natural difficulties. Among the operators, the question was openly debated: was it necessary to force the 10th

swamps to knead the guards army? Wouldn't it be better for front troops to bypass this area from the north and south, keeping us in the second echelon for the time being. The guardsmen would have rested, replenished with equipment and personnel, and with the front reaching the Vid-zemsky Upland, the army could again be used in the main direction.

Now I firmly believe that this is exactly what should have been done."

A few pages below, the marshal himself confirms that there was little use from this "Suvorov crossing": "Our hopes that, with overcoming the Luban swamps, the troops of the front would enter the operational space and the advance to Riga would develop at a more rapid pace, did not come true. During the first half of August (while Eremenko was "leaking"), the enemy, entrenched on pre-prepared lines, offered furious resistance.

With the introduction of the fresh 42nd Army west of Madona on August 23, the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front advanced another 25 km in the center, lost 65 thousand people, almost all the tanks and were forced to stop.

On August 10, the 3rd Baltic Front resumed its offensive. The main blow to Vyra and Tartu was delivered by the adjacent flanks of the armies of Romanovsky and Zakhvataev. On the first day they broke through the main line of defense and advanced 10 km. Developing success, formations of the 67th Army, with the assistance of the 1st Shock Army, captured the city of Vyru on August 13. The advance of the Soviet troops in the Tartu direction was facilitated by the landing under the command of Lieutenant General A.A. Grechkin, landed on August 16 by a brigade of river ships on the western shore of Lake Peipus in the Mehikorma area.

On August 24, Romanovsky's divisions broke into the city, and the next day they completely occupied it. By the end of August, the troops of the front reached the Emajõgi River with their right wing, and with their center and left wing on the eastern shore of Lake Vyrtsjärv, east of Valga, and were again stopped. Having repelled enemy counterattacks, they were forced on September 6 to go on the defensive.

As a result of the operation, Maslennikov's troops were unable to fulfill their assigned tasks, but, having advanced 100-130 km, they created favorable conditions for reaching the flank and rear of the enemy Narva grouping. Soviet losses - 71,806 people.

BALTIC OPERATION

As a result of the simultaneous operations of several fronts, the enemy's position in the Baltics seriously deteriorated, but again it was not possible to defeat him. During the summer offensive of the Leningrad, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic Fronts, by autumn, Soviet troops reached the line of the city of Narva, Lake Peipus, north of Tartu, Lake Vyrtsjärv, Gulbene, Madona, Krustpils, Dobeles, Raseiniai.

The German divisions, with heavy losses, withdrew to a new line stretching from Narva Bay to the borders of East Prussia. They found themselves pressed against the Baltic Sea in a limited area, and their main forces were deeply enveloped from the south. On the line from the Gulf of Finland to Dobeles, the troops of Army Group North under the command of General Scherner defended themselves. It still included the 16th and 18th armies, the Narva task force. To the south, in the area from Dobeles to the Neman River, the 3rd Panzer Army of Army Group Center was on the defensive. In total, the Baltic German grouping included 56 divisions, including 5 tank and 2 motorized, and 3 motorized brigades, they numbered 730 thousand soldiers and officers, 7000 guns and mortars, 1216 tanks and assault guns.

From the air, they were supported by 400 aircraft of the 1st and partially 6th air fleets.

The German command attached great importance to the retention of this strategically important area, since the loss of it further complicated the military-political and economic position of Germany and at the same time created an advantageous position for the offensive of Soviet troops into East Prussia from the north.

east. The loss of the Baltic States led to a sharp deterioration in the basing and difficulty in the activities of the German fleet in the Baltic Sea.

The enemy expected the main blows of the Soviet troops at Madona and Valga and hoped that he would be able to maintain his positions here. At the same time, the leadership of the Army Group "North" was afraid of the offensive of the troops of the 1st Baltic Front on Riga from the Jelgava region, Dobeles. Moving here along the shortest path, they could intercept all land communications leading to East Prussia and isolate German troops in the Baltic. Given the likelihood of such an attack, the German command concentrated the strongest grouping southwest of Jelgava, including all five tank divisions that it had in the Baltic.

In this area, large measures were taken to strengthen the engineering defense. A significant part of the aviation was also aimed here. This grouping received the task of stubbornly holding defensive lines, expanding the corridor south of Tukums and ensuring freedom of communication for Army Group North with Courland and East Prussia. The Germans also feared for the section of the front adjoining the Daugava River from the north, where Soviet troops could strike at Riga from the east. On

in the event of an aggravation of the situation in the area of the operational group "Narva", it was planned to withdraw its troops to the defensive line "Cesis".

In an effort to stabilize the front and disrupt the Soviet offensive, the enemy urgently erected additional defensive structures here and strengthened the grouping of his troops. A developed defense in depth, multi-lane, was created, especially in the Riga direction. The abundance of rivers, lakes and wooded and swampy terrain contributed to the conduct of defensive operations and made it difficult to attack.

To defeat the Baltic grouping, the Soviet command attracted all the forces of the left wing of the Leningrad Front and the troops of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic Fronts - 14 combined arms, one tank and four air armies. In total, these fronts had 135 rifle divisions, 6 fortified areas, 7 tank and 1 mechanized corps, 11 separate tank brigades - 1,546,400 people, about 17,500 guns and mortars, 3,080 tanks and self-propelled guns, 3,500 combat aircraft, including naval aviation and ADD.

The forces of the Baltic Fleet also took part in the operation.

The general strategic plan provided for: the isolation of the Baltic group of Germans from the rest of the Wehrmacht forces, the exit of Soviet armies to the coast of the Gulf of Riga and the destruction of the enemy in parts. The main blows, according to the directive of the Headquarters of August 29, were delivered by the forces of the three Baltic fronts in the general direction to Riga from the northeast, from the east and south. The overall management of their operations was entrusted to Marshal Vasilevsky.

The task of the troops of the 3rd Baltic Front (1st shock, 54th, 67th field, 14th air armies), to which the 61st Army, 10th Tank Corps and 2nd Guards Artillery Division were transferred from the reserve was to strike

main forces from the Sangaste area in the direction of Valmiera, Riga. At the same time, they were to launch an offensive towards the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front.

The 2nd Baltic Front (3rd shock, 10th guards, 22nd, 42nd combined arms, 15th air armies), inflicting the main blow in the direction of Nitaure, Riga, was to defeat the enemy north of the Daugava and capture Riga.

Before the troops of the 1st Baltic Front (2nd and 6th Guards, 4th Shock, 43rd, 51st Combined Arms, 5th Guards Tank, 3rd Air Armies), the Headquarters set the task of attacking with the forces of the right wing from the Bauska area in the direction of Vecmūža, Iecava, defeat the enemy grouping operating to the south

Daugava, and go to the coast of the Gulf of Riga, cutting off the escape routes for the troops of Army Group North. On the left wing, they were supposed to wear down the German tank grouping in defensive battles and in no case prevent its breakthrough in the Jelgava and Šiauliai directions. In addition, in order to achieve the greatest strength of the encirclement, General Bagramyan decided to prepare an additional attack in the general direction of Kemerī in order to defeat the enemy's Tukums grouping, cut the Riga-Tukums railway and highway, and reach the coast of the Gulf of Riga.

On September 2, the task was assigned to the Leningrad Front of Marshal Govorov. He was to transfer 8 rifle divisions of the 2nd shock army from the Narva sector to the Tartu region, strike in the direction of Rakvere, go to the rear of the enemy's Narva grouping and then advance on Tallinn. In solving these tasks, the front was assisted by the Baltic Fleet, which was under its operational subordination, under the command of Admiral V.F. Tributs.

The fronts of Chernyakhovsky and Bagramyan remained under the care of Marshal Vasilevsky. Marshal Govorov, while remaining commander of the Leningrad Front, was supposed to coordinate the actions of Maslennikov and Eremenko as a representative of the Headquarters - another Stalinist experiment that cost Govorov his health.

The beginning of the offensive of the Baltic Fronts was scheduled by the Headquarters for September 14, and the Leningrad Front, in connection with the implementation of a large and complex regrouping of troops on the Tartu sector, on September 17.

Thus, the main efforts of the Soviet troops in the operation were concentrated on defeating the Riga enemy grouping with concentric strikes. The three Baltic fronts, advancing in the general direction towards Riga, were to envelop and destroy the main forces of Army Group North. The offensive was planned in a strip up to 500 km wide, the defense was broken through in seven sectors, amounting to 76 km, where the Soviet command concentrated about 80 percent of the advancing rifle divisions with reinforcements.

The stupidly straightforward plan of the strategic Baltic operation looks like a striking contrast in comparison with the actions of the Red Army in Belarus. Moreover, during the preparation, as if in the bad old days, the fronts did not interact with each other at all. "Before," writes General Sandalov, "preparing for inter-front operations, we usually arranged meetings, exchanged views, and agreed on interaction. They were usually attended by the chiefs of staff, members of the military councils and artillery commanders. Sometimes representatives of the Stavka held something like a meeting with the participation of front commanders. There was nothing like this this time." Ultimately, it all came down to the socialist competition of the fronts in the consistent gnaw through of defensive lines on the way to Riga, combined with the latent hope that the Germans themselves were about to leave the Baltic.

The Riga operation began on September 14, 1944 with the simultaneous offensive of the Baltic fronts after powerful artillery and aviation preparation.

The 1st Baltic Front achieved the greatest results on the first day of the operation. The powerful artillery preparation and air strikes of the 3rd Air Army in the Bauska area proved to be especially effective. The troops of the 43rd army of Beloborodov and the 4th shock army of Malyshev, who went on the offensive at 13 o'clock, moved forward, almost without meeting organized resistance. Against 16 rifle divisions, supported by three tank brigades, heavy tank and self-propelled artillery regiments and high-capacity artillery (368 tanks and more than 1000 artillery pieces operated in the 43rd Army zone alone

caliber up to 203 mm), the Germans here had three infantry divisions of the 1st Army Corps. In an hour and a half, the strike groups overcame the main defensive line of the enemy in a sector of 25 km, and the forward units crossed the Lielupe and Memele rivers and advanced up to 14 km in some directions by the end of the day. Developing success, Beloborodov's army broke through the rear defensive line on the second day. The advance detachment of the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, which rushed into the gap, advanced 50 km on September 16 and reached the Daugava, and rifle formations reached the approaches to Ballona.

Events developed differently to the north of the Daugava. The shock groupings of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic Fronts only managed to penetrate the enemy defenses by 1-3 km. The Germans, having discovered their preparation for the offensive, in a number of sectors withdrew the bulk of the troops from the front line to the second position, and here they put up stubborn resistance. "Isometric gymnastics" continued on the second and third days of the operation. Despite the introduction into battle of most of the rifle divisions that made up the second echelons, the troops could not overcome the enemy's main defense line, although four army corps and the 6th SS corps opposed seven Soviet armies from the German side.

"There were also few tanks and self-propelled guns for direct infantry support," Sandalov analyzes the situation. - It also affected the fact that we did not show the necessary flexibility and ingenuity. The blows were delivered all the time in the same places, trying to break through exactly where it was planned. But, perhaps, it was possible to come up with some kind of workaround. But no one dared to propose changes to the adopted offensive plan: it was developed by the Headquarters and approved by Stalin. And this meant that no arguments would be taken into account.

The losses of both sides were great, but the Germans had much less forces. General Scherner reported to the top leadership that the last moment had come for the German troops in the Baltic States: all the reserves had already been brought into battle, the unattacked defense sectors were exposed to the limit, in the directions of the main attacks of the Soviet troops, the losses amounted to from one third to a half of the entire strength of the divisions, the combat effectiveness of the troops is catastrophically falling, the forces of the Army Group "North" are exhausted, and it is not able to conduct lengthy defensive battles. In his opinion, there was only one option left - to retreat.

On September 16, Hitler's Headquarters allowed the withdrawal of the Narva Task Force from Estonia. Then the troops of the 18th Army were to leave the Valga line and, together with the formations of the Narva group that had poured into it, take up defenses at the Cesis line. However, the onslaught of the Soviet troops forced the enemy to retreat even further - to the Sigulda defensive line.

At the same time, the German command took urgent measures to

localization of a dangerous breakthrough of the 1st Baltic Front. On September 16, the 3rd Tank Army, with the help of twelve motorized battalions, supported by up to 300 tanks and assault guns, delivered a counterattack from the area southwest of Dobeles to the flank and rear of the troops of the 5th Guards Tank and 51st Armies prepared for the offensive. In the Baldone area, the Beloborodov army was attacked by the 16th Army with the forces of six divisions, including two tank and one motorized. Particularly fierce battles flared up in these areas. Some positions changed hands several times. Only on September 18 did the 43rd Army manage to take Baldone. However, further advancement, despite the entry into battle of the 19th tank corps of Major General D.I. Samara, stalled. Weakening his forces in front of other fronts, General Scherner managed to put together a powerful group south of Riga. According to Baghramyan: "Now it was difficult to determine who was attacking and who was defending. If in one area the Nazis had to defend themselves, then in others our troops were forced to fight off counterattacks."

On the morning of September 17, the troops of the Leningrad Front went on the offensive, launching the Tallinn operation.

In Estonia, the Germans prepared a positional defense, saturated with numerous engineering structures and barriers. The defense was most developed on the Narva Isthmus and between lakes Chudskoye and Vyrtsjärv. The troops of the 8th and 2nd shock armies of the left wing of the front had 16 rifle divisions, 3 fortified areas - 195 thousand people. According to the plan of the operation, the main blow with fourteen divisions was delivered by the 2nd shock army of Fedyuninsky in the direction of Rakvere, in the rear of the enemy Narva grouping. Subsequently, turning the main force to the west, she was to advance on Tallinn. The army was given 15 artillery and mortar brigades, a tank brigade, 12 tank and self-propelled artillery regiments - 2040 barrels and about 500 tanks and self-propelled guns. To ensure continuous support for the advance of troops, two mortars were allocated to each rifle regiment.

The 8th Army of General Starikov was tasked with being ready for an immediate transition to the offensive from the line of the Narva River to the west in the event of a weakening of the enemy's defenses or his withdrawal in this sector.

During the preparation of the operation, the troops of the 2nd shock army were regrouped from the Narva sector to the Tartu region in a short time, secretly from the enemy. Their crossing (over 100 thousand people, more than 1000 guns and mortars, 4000 vehicles, 14 thousand tons of ammunition and 67 thousand tons of food) across Lake Peipus was successfully carried out by the 25th separate brigade of river ships, which further supported the army's right-flank formations with artillery fire advancing along the western coast of Lake Peipus. It also ensured the landing of one division of the 8th Army on the northern shore of Lake Peipsi, in the rear of the Narva enemy grouping.

Three infantry divisions of the 2nd Army Corps under the command of General Hasse held the defense against Fedyuninsky's troops at the turn of the Emajõgi River. According to intelligence, the Germans had 120 tanks and assault guns. Here, too, the enemy withdrew the bulk of manpower and artillery from the forward edge for the period of artillery preparation.

The offensive of the 2nd shock army began after a powerful artillery and aviation preparation. The 13th Air Army and the air forces of the KBF carried out more than 600 sorties. The infantry and tanks quickly broke through the enemy's main line of defense, while forcing the Emajõgi River on their right flank. By the end of the day they had advanced to a depth of 5 to 18 km. The greatest success was achieved by the 8th Estonian Rifle Corps, advancing with the support of the 25th separate brigade of river ships along the western shore of Lake Peipsi ...

The advance of Fedyuninsky's divisions forced the German command to speed up the withdrawal of the Narva task force, which was unexpected for the troops of the Leningrad Front. On September 18, the 2nd shock army began pursuing the retreating enemy. On the night of September 19, the 8th Army went into pursuit. Its troops advanced up to 90 km in two days and reached the Rakvere region. Therefore, the further advance of the 2nd shock army in the northern direction became inexpedient, and the front commander turned its main forces to the west, and transferred the mobile group of the army and the Estonian corps to the 8th army, which developed the attack on Tallinn.

Pursuing the retreating enemy, the troops of the Leningrad Front quickly advanced in the western and southwestern directions. On September 22, Starikov's army liberated Tallinn. Facilitating the offensive of the ground forces, the Baltic Fleet landed troops in the bays of Kunda, Loksa, in Tallinn, Paldiski and captured the island

Naissar northwest of Tallinn. On September 23, Fedyuninsky's troops liberated Pärnu, and by the end of September 26, moving south along the sea coast, they entered the territory of Latvia. On this day, General Fedyuninsky received an order to stop the pursuit: the 2nd shock was withdrawn to the reserve of the Headquarters. The baton was taken over by the 67th Army of the 3rd Baltic Front.

As a result of the Tallinn operation, Soviet troops ousted the Narva task force and occupied the entire mainland of Estonia. The enemy was forced to withdraw his forces from the Gulf of Finland.

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front only on September 21, using the success of the Leningrad Front, completed the breakthrough of the enemy defense to the entire tactical depth. In essence, having secured the exit of the Narva group to Riga, the German rearguards in front of Maslennikov's front left their positions themselves, and very quickly: the Soviet units pursued them in vehicles.

On September 23, formations of the 10th Panzer Corps liberated the city of Valmiera, and the 61st Army of General P.A. Belova, acting on the left flank of the front, went to the Smiltene area. Its troops, in cooperation with parts of the 54th Army of General Roginsky, by the morning of September 26, captured the city of Cesis.

By this time, the 2nd Baltic Front, in the course of intense fighting, was able to ram the Cesis line, but the rate of its advance did not exceed 5-7 km per day. The Germans were not defeated, they retreated in an organized and competent way: "The enemy retreated with rifts. While some of its units held their positions, those that retreated to the rear equipped new ones. And each time we had to break through the enemy defenses again. The already meager stocks of shells were melting before our eyes. The armies were forced to break open fortifications in narrow areas - 3-5 km wide. The divisions made even smaller gaps, and the second echelons were immediately introduced into them. They were already expanding the front of the breakthrough. In the last 24 hours, battles were fought both day and night ... Breaking the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the 2nd Baltic Front was slowly approaching Riga. Each milestone was given with great difficulty.

In a report to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the course of the operation in the Baltic, Marshal Vasilevsky explained this not only by the difficult terrain and stubborn resistance of the enemy, but also by the fact that the front poorly maneuvered infantry and artillery, put up with the attachment of troops to the roads, and excessively reserved infantry formations.

Baghramyan's troops at that time were busy repelling strong enemy counterattacks. On September 22, the 43rd Army managed to drive the Germans out of Baldone and push them back

to North. Only in the zone of the 6th Guards Army, which covered the left flank of the front's shock group, aimed at Riga from the south, did the enemy manage to penetrate the defenses of the Soviet troops up to 6 km.

The German command, taking into account the reality of the threat of cutting off the troops of Army Group North from East Prussia, took all measures to strengthen its defenses on the outskirts of Riga, especially in front of Bagramyan's front, whose troops were 16 km from the city.

By September 24, the German troops, operating against the left wing of the Leningrad Front, retreated to Riga with the main forces, and part of the forces entrenched themselves on the islands of the Moonsund archipelago. The troops of Army Group North suffered significant losses. At the same time, as a result of the withdrawal of the main forces of the group, the front was reduced by 300 km. This allowed her command to significantly condense the battle formations of troops in the Riga direction. On the line "Sigulda" with a length of 105 km between the Gulf of Riga and the northern coast of the Daugava, 17 divisions were defending, and approximately on the same front south of the Daugava to Auce - 14 divisions, including 3

tank. With these forces, which occupied pre-prepared defensive lines, the German command sought to delay the further advance of the Soviet troops, and in case of failure, to withdraw Army Group North to East Prussia.

Nine Soviet armies ran into the Sigulda defensive line at the end of September and were stopped.

Shtemenko: "This time it was not possible to split up the enemy grouping. She retreated with battles to a pre-prepared line 60-80 kilometers from Riga. Our troops, concentrated on the approaches to the capital of Latvia, literally gnawed through the enemy's defenses, methodically, meter by meter, pushing him out. Such a course of the operation did not promise a quick victory and was associated with heavy losses for us.

The Soviet high command became more and more convinced that the continuation of the offensive with frontal attacks in the same directions did not give anything but an increase in losses, and did not ensure the cutting off of German troops from East Prussia. The headquarters admitted that "the operation near Riga is developing unsatisfactorily." Therefore, on September 24, it was decided to move the main efforts to the Siauliai region and strike in the Memel direction, that is, to do what Bagramyan had proposed back in August.

In this regard, the commander General Eremenko received an order, without stopping the movement north of the Daugava, to transfer the 3rd shock and 22nd armies to the southern bank of the river by October 3 and change the armies of the 1st Baltic Front here. The troops of the 2nd Baltic Front, in cooperation with the 3rd Baltic Front, were to defeat the opposing enemy forces, capture Riga and clear the Germans from the coast of the Baltic Sea from Riga to Liepaja. The 1st Baltic Front was to conduct a new offensive operation in order to break through the enemy defenses to the west and south-west of Siauliai and reach the coast in the Palanga, Klaipeda (Me-mel) sector, the mouth of the Neman River, thereby cutting off the path of the Baltic grouping waste. The start of the operation was scheduled by the Headquarters for October 1-2. The 39th Army of the 3rd Belorussian Front was also involved in it - 6 rifle divisions and 1 rifle brigade.

The troops of the Leningrad Front, in cooperation with the Baltic Fleet, were supposed to clear the islands of the Moonsund archipelago from the Germans. On October 3, the 3rd Belorussian Front received an order to prepare and conduct an offensive operation in the Gumbinnen direction, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic Front, to defeat the enemy and capture the Königsberg area.

At the end of October, Bagramyan's troops stopped their offensive in the Riga direction and began preparations for the Memel operation. It was to be carried out in a strip of 145 km to a depth of 130 km. A breakthrough of the defense was planned in two sections, the total length of which was 31 km. The front included the 2nd and 6th Guards, 4th shock, 43rd and 51st combined arms, 5th Guards Tank, 3rd Air armies, two tank and one mechanized corps - 51 rifle divisions, 6 separate tank brigades.

During the preparation of the operation, the 1st Baltic Front in six days secretly regrouped four combined arms and one tank armies, two tank and one mechanized corps - about half a million people, over 9000 guns and mortars and a huge mass of military equipment - at a distance of 80 to 240 km. As a result, superiority over the enemy was created by 2.5 times in people, almost 11 times in artillery, more than 3 times in tanks and self-propelled guns. For each kilometer of the breakthrough, up to 200 artillery pieces were allocated.

3rd shock, which, due to Yushkevich's illness, was headed by Lieutenant General N.P. Simonyak, and the 22nd Army of the 2nd Baltic Front occupied the vacated area south of the Daugava.

Baghramyan's troops delivered the main blow with the forces of the 6th Guards, 43rd, 51st Combined Arms and 5th Guards Tank Armies in the Memel direction and the second blow by the 2nd Guards Army with the 1st Tank Corps in the Tilsit direction. The offensive was supported from the north by active operations towards Liepaja by the 4th shock army and from the south by the strike of the 39th army from the Raseiniai region in the direction of Tauragė.

Five infantry divisions of the 3rd Panzer Army were defending in front of the front, stretched out in a thread on the first defensive line. So, in the breakthrough sector of the 43rd Army, where General Beloborodov concentrated 9 rifle divisions, the Germans had only the 551st People's Grenadier Division - the brainchild of total mobilization. True, the same can be said about the Soviet formations, where the knocked out fighters were replaced by poorly trained conscripts: "We received replenishment from the recently liberated regions of the Baltic states, as well as the western regions of Ukraine and Belarus. The vast majority of recruits did not participate in the battles, the youth, of course, did not serve in the army, and older people underwent military training a long time ago, even in the bourgeois armies. It was necessary to introduce a new replenishment into combat formation in a short time ... "The main danger to the attackers was the tank formations located southwest of Riga.

The offensive began on October 5 with reconnaissance in combat in the bands of the 6th Guards, 43rd and 2nd Guards armies. In the afternoon, after a short but powerful artillery and aviation preparation, the main forces also went on the offensive. The surprise was complete. Already on the first day, the armies of Chistyakov and Beloborodov broke through the enemy defenses in the main direction and advanced to a depth of 17 km, and General Chanchibadze - up to 7 km.

In order to develop success from the morning of the second day of the operation, the front commander sent General Volsky's tank army into the breakthrough, which began to rapidly move west, to Palanga and Klaipėda. At the same time, the mobile groups of the 6th and 2nd Guards armies - the 19th and 1st tank corps - were introduced into the breakthrough. On October 6, the troops of the 51st, 4th shock and 39th armies entered the battle. Troops of the 3rd and 2nd

The Baltic fronts launched an offensive in the Riga direction.

In two days, Soviet troops broke through the enemy defenses to the full tactical depth and put Army Group North in a critical situation. The pace of advance steadily increased. On the sixth day of the operation, Bagramyan's troops reached the Baltic Sea on a 35-kilometer stretch and started fighting for Klaipeda. Volsky's tankers were especially successful.

Army Group North was cut off from Germany for the second time. However, the subsequent fighting became protracted. In the Klaipeda region, the enemy offered stubborn resistance to the troops of the 5th Guards Tank and 43rd Armies. The German command threw here into battle the forces of the retreating units of the 7th Panzer Division, the motorized division "Grossdeutschland", as well as the 58th Infantry, transferred from near Riga by sea and occupying pre-prepared defensive lines.

The battles were also tense in the bands of the 6th Guards and 51st armies, which were deployed by the front to the north with the task of advancing towards Liepaja. On the right flank, Malyshev's army repelled fierce counterattacks. In the zone of the 2nd Guards Army, as well as the 39th and 5th armies, advancing north and south of the Neman, enemy resistance also increased. The Germans tried to restore land communication with Scherner, striking from East Prussia, but were driven back beyond the Neman, to Tilsit.

It is interesting that, having almost completely completed the tasks of the Memel operation, Bagramyan's front could not take Memel (Klaipeda) itself. The city was well fortified, surrounded by four defensive lines with a system of forts. They could be taken on the move by aiming a strike force here, but at the first stage, the Soviet

the troops were torn, and then the moment was lost. "In my opinion," writes General Beloborodov, "the main reason was that, approaching Memel, we did not gather our forces into a fist. The high pace of the offensive, which in some days resembled a pursuit, overwhelmed us, the army dispersed its forces on a broad front. Each formation sought to be the first to go to the sea ... And it turned out that we delivered the initial blow to the Memel fortified area with only one third of the forces that we had ... the army did not catch the moment in time, failed, when it was possible, to aim everything at one point. They stretched out on a wide front, there was a flattening of the blow, there was no injection ... If Memel had been taken, the operation would have been classic.

The German garrison in Klaipeda, under the leadership of the headquarters of the 40th Panzer Corps, held out for another three months.

A powerful blow in the Memel direction had a decisive influence on the entire situation in the Baltic. Under the influence of this blow, the command of Army Group North, without waiting for the decision of the high command, on the morning of October 6, began to withdraw its forces from the Riga region to the Courland Peninsula. Upon learning of the fall of Palanga, Hitler gave his official "blessing" to this.

The 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts began to pursue, but as they approached Riga, enemy resistance increased. On August 8, the Headquarters belatedly ordered General Eremenko to transfer the 42nd and 10th Guards Armies — and the rest of the forces of the 2nd Baltic Front across the Daugava. Bagramyan's troops, having "laid the ski track" to Riga, now completely switched to other tasks.

On October 10, the troops of two fronts came close to the Riga defensive bypass and gnawed through its first strip for two days. In the early morning of October 13, the 67th, 61st and 1st shock armies of the 3rd Baltic Front launched an assault

eastern outskirts of the Latvian capital. During the day, the troops of General Maslennikov cleared the right bank of the enemy and reached the Daugava. Bridges across the river were blown up. On this day, the Soviet mass media announced the liberation of Riga and fired a salute corresponding to the occasion, although on the southern coast of Eremenko's army they had just begun to break through the second strip. The Germans fought stubbornly here, ensuring the evacuation of troops and military equipment. The so-called Zadvine - the western part of the city - was occupied by the 10th Guards Army only two days later. The last units of the German garrison went across the river

Lielupe.

On October 16, the 3rd shock and 42nd armies struck from Debele to Saldus, Liepaja, and the 1st shock - along the coast of the Gulf of Riga to Tukums, but the success was

insignificant. In three days of fighting, the Germans with strong counterattacks stopped the advance of the Soviet divisions and pushed them back. To fight on the land front, adopting Soviet experience, German sailors went ashore and went on the attack with their own, German "polundra". Their blow was taken by the 150th Infantry Division of Colonel V.M. Shatilov, who recalls the brutal oncoming battle:

"There was a strange calm in the camp of the enemy. And suddenly, an unusual black-white-blue avalanche rolled down the slope from above. They were German sailors. They fled in open jackets, under which vests were full of. They did not have knapsacks bulging behind their shoulders. Nothing superfluous - only machine guns and grenades. I have heard and read more than once about how our sailors fought heroically on land. Often neglecting the tactics of land combat and equally neglecting death, they acted with amazing courage and fearlessness. And, despite heavy losses, they terrified the enemy, put him to flight. They happened to succeed even where more experienced in

ground combat foot soldiers. Why? I didn't find an answer...

And now I realized what a terrifying impression this monolithic mass, soldered by its own laws and traditions, makes. I noticed how our soldiers slowed down. Some people began to stop... Some kind of long-drawn-out cry, more like a wail, soared over the chain of sailors. And although their bullets had not yet harmed us, it was felt that for some part of the fighters this attack acts as

hypnosis.

It was necessary to immediately create a sharp turning point in this psychological duel. But before I had time to make a decision, someone's high voice rang out:

"Brothers, we beat the fascist infantry, we will beat the sailors too!"

- Let's beat! — rolled down the rows. People picked up this cry, perhaps mechanically, without delving into its meaning. But he created a sense of unity of the team, encouraged, called for action. And the chain rushed forward with new energy.

In the yoke, indeed, they were "beaten", because the "fascists" could not have real heroism behind their souls - only "one traditional naval dashing".

From October 20 there was a brief lull.

Thus, the Baltic enemy grouping was cut off from East Prussia, the German troops were thrown back to the Courland Peninsula and more than 30 enemy divisions, the main forces of the Army Group North were squeezed in the area between Tukums and Liepaja; in Klaipeda, up to three

divisions.

The headquarters in the directive of October 16 assigned the destruction of the enemy grouping, tightly engulfed and pressed against the Baltic Sea in Courland, to Generals Eremenko and Bagramyan.

The 3rd Baltic Front was abolished, its administration, together with front-line units and institutions, was put into reserve, troops were transferred to the 1st and 2ndth

Baltic and Leningrad fronts.

Two days later, the Headquarters pointed out the exceptional importance of the speedy liquidation of the German troops surrounded northeast of Liepaja and in the Klaipeda region. She demanded to direct the efforts of the troops of the 1st and 2nd Baltic fronts to defeat them, to involve long-range aviation and the air force of the Baltic Fleet in this.

The 2nd Baltic Front now included the 1st shock, 10th guards, 3rd shock, 22nd and 42nd combined arms armies and three tank corps, which occupied the strip from Tukums to Auce. General Eremenko was going to deliver the main blow with the three armies of the left wing in the general direction of Saldus, Kuldiga, Ventspils. In the zone of the 10th Guards Army, it was planned to introduce the 5th and 10th tank corps into the breakthrough.

The 1st Baltic Front included the 4th shock, 2nd and 6th guards, 43rd, 51st combined arms, 5th guards tank armies. General Bagramyan delivered the main blow with the troops of Kreizer, Chistyakov and the tank army on Saldus, Liepaja. Belov's 61st Army was transferred from the Stavka reserve. The army of Beloborodov blockaded Klaipeda with part of its forces, and with its left flank stood on the border of East Prussia along the Neman. Marshal Vasilevsky was again appointed to coordinate the actions of the fronts.

The general plan was to split the Courland grouping, and then destroy it piece by piece. However, preparations for the new operation were conducted, to put it mildly, coolly. Both the leadership of the Baltic fronts and the General Staff were at first convinced that the German command would try to evacuate the troops of Army Group North from Courland to Germany as quickly as possible in order to use them for the defense of the Reich. But Hitler had not listened to the opinion of the generals for a long time. Instead of withdrawing troops from the peninsula or breaking through to East Prussia, the German command of the sea

transferred marching reinforcements to Courland. In addition, due to the lack of tonnage, it took at least six months to evacuate the entire group. But, unlike Stalingrad, it was possible to supply the troops with everything necessary through the ports of Liepaja and Ventspils. In October, ships delivered 881 thousand tons of cargo here, in November this figure doubled.

General Scherner was tasked with a stubborn defense to divert Russian forces from East Prussia. The command of the group hastily turned the peninsula into a continuous fortified area with numerous defensive lines and cut-off positions. Behind one border, at a distance of 6-8 km, the next one was erected. And so to the sea. Crossed, with a large number of lakes and rivers, wooded and swampy terrain favored the organization of defense.

The Soviet offensive began on October 27 under the slogan "completely liberate Soviet Latvia by the 27th anniversary of the October Revolution" with powerful artillery and aviation preparation, which, due to scarce intelligence, was carried out mainly in areas. According to General Kazakov: "Accurate

We did not have data on the grouping of enemy forces and means in this sector. Only in the course of hostilities ... it was possible to reveal that the most solid defensive positions of the Germans are located 15-30 km from the front line. Soviet troops on the first day of the offensive broke through the enemy defenses on a front of 20 km and moved forward 4-7 km, capturing the city of Auce. In the evening, the 10th Tank Corps of Major General M.K. was brought into action. Shaposhnikov. The next day, the divisions advanced another 6-7 km, expanding the breakthrough to 50 km.

However, in the future, the rate of advance began to steadily decline from 3-4 km to a few meters per day. Every meter had to be paid in blood. The Germans resisted desperately, counterattacking continuously, at the same time throwing up new formations from the depths. Five days later, instead of four, there were already 10 divisions in front of the strike force of the 2nd Baltic Front, including the 12th Panzer. As Marshal Eremenko admits: "In terms of fire saturation and the number of counterattacks, the battles of the last days were unmatched throughout 1944. A characteristic feature of the enemy's defensive tactics, revealed in the course of offensive operations during this period, was that during our artillery preparation, Hitler the command did not withdraw manpower into the depths of the defense in order to preserve it, as was done before. The infantry continued to take cover in the trenches, at their bottom and in niches, without moving a single step. Therefore, with the transfer of our artillery fire to the depths, the Nazis met the attackers with volleys from all types of weapons, trying to prevent our infantry from wedging into their battle formations. During ten days of continuous fighting from October 27 to

November 5, the troops of the left wing of the front advanced to a depth of 35 km and stopped 25 km from Saldus. There was a crisis: many people and most of the tanks were out of order, ammunition was used up.

Events unfolded similarly in the zone of the 1st Baltic Front. Baghramyan's troops almost immediately encountered an enemy grouping of four infantry divisions, supported by the main forces of the 4th and 14th tank divisions and two heavy tank battalions, which was preparing to break through the corridor to Klaipeda. In three days, repelling counterattacks, the Soviet armies were able to advance only 6 km. And in the future, every piece of land could be beaten off after repeatedly repeated attacks. The more the front line was reduced, the denser the enemy's battle formations became and the tougher the defense.

In early November, the weather deteriorated sharply, the roads became muddy, heavy fogs and dense clouds ruled out aviation operations. On November 6, "moving forward became simply impossible." However, the Headquarters insistently demanded a continuation.

General Eremenko began to prepare an offensive in the Tukums direction with the forces of the 1st shock and 22nd armies from the Dobeles region along the Gulf of Riga to the flank of the enemy's defensive positions. The attack was to be supported by the 28th artillery division of the RGK breakthrough, two Guards mortar brigades and three regiments of rocket artillery. To develop success, the 19th tank corps of Lieutenant General I.D. Vasiliev. The 10th Panzer Corps remained in reserve. Baghramyan did not change his disposition.

The offensive of the 2nd Baltic Front, originally scheduled for November 20, did not take place due to bad weather. Rain and fog prevented artillery and air preparation. The next day, due to unfavorable weather conditions, the strike of the 1st Baltic Front was postponed. The general offensive began on November 23, but a day later it had to be stopped again, since on the morning of November 24 fog covered the horizon with a dense veil. Visibility dropped to 300-400 meters. Moving almost blindly, the Soviet troops managed to occupy only the first two trenches.

On November 25, 1944, the offensive was stopped. The Germans continued to improve their defenses, covering the peninsula with a dense network of anti-tank ditches, barbed wire, minefields and long-term gun emplacements.

LANDING ON MOONSUND

At this time, the troops of the Leningrad Front, in cooperation with the Baltic Fleet, carried out the Moonsund landing operation.

As a result of the Tallinn operation, the troops of the Leningrad Front reached the coast of the Gulf of Riga on September 25, which created favorable conditions for the liberation of the Moonsund archipelago. The German command, evaluating the islands of the Moonsund archipelago as the last strongholds that provided the possibility of sea communications necessary to supply their troops in Riga, decided to hold them to the last. In mid-September, to defend these islands, the Germans transferred General Schirmer's 23rd Infantry Division from Riga, which was initially subordinate to the commander of the 16th Army, and then to the commander of the 43rd Army Corps. Including four security battalions and several artillery battalions, the "garrison" of the enemy consisted of 11,500 people. The light forces of the Kriegsmarine were also based here - 2 destroyers, 22 landing and landing artillery barges, 14 minesweepers and 2 torpedo boats.

The Soviet command sought to capture the Moonsund Islands as quickly as possible in order to expand the operational zone of the Baltic Fleet and transfer combat operations to the enemy's sea lanes. The operation was carried out on the move, trying to break into the archipelago before the Germans had time to create a solid antiamphibious defense. Therefore, many decisions were improvisational in nature.

The first and main obstacle was the scarcity of funds that the fleet could attract to solve this problem. The use of large surface ships for artillery support of the landing and counteraction to the German fleet was completely ruled out. Due to the difficult mine situation, Soviet ships were generally forbidden to enter the Gulf of Finland, as well as submarines. In addition, the Germans did not leave behind a single suitable base on the coast of Estonia. For example, in Tallinn, they blew up all the piers, power plants, port buildings and workshops and densely packed the harbors with anchor and bottom mines. For the landing of troops, the fleet could only use boats, and then only thanks to Finland's withdrawal from the war: on September 19, the Finnish naval command

provided minefield diagrams and navigation charts of its skerry fairways along the northern coast of the bay. With a known risk, the boats could operate along the southern coast, interacting with units of the 8th Army of General Starikov.

The forces of the Baltic Fleet allocated for the operation consisted of 55 torpedo boats, 13 patrol boats, 13 minesweeping boats, 8 armored boats and 40 tenders. For their concentration, it was planned to use a number of points on the coast of Estonia, which was possible only as a result of the preliminary capture of the island of Vormsi, which blocked the entrance to the Voosi Kurk Strait between the island and the mainland. By September 26, the harbors of Rohuküla, Hapsalu and Virtsu were occupied by the troops of the 8th Army. On the morning of September 27, a division of torpedo boats under the command of Captain 3rd Rank E.V. Ossetsky was landed on Vormsi by a battalion of marines from the 260th Separate Marine Brigade, who cleared the island of the enemy in the afternoon. On September 28-29, through the strait, which the Germans did not have time to mine, forces to provide troops broke through to the points of reception of troops.

The 109th and 8th Estonian Rifle Corps of the 8th Army, as well as the 260th Separate Marine Brigade, were involved in the operation to capture the Moonsund Archipelago. Air support was to be carried out by 295 aircraft of the 13th Air Army and Fleet Aviation.

The key to capturing the archipelago was Muhu Island, separated from the mainland by a strait about 3.5 miles wide and connected to Sarema Island by a one and a half kilometer dam. Therefore, first of all, it was supposed to take possession of the island of Muhu, then - Khiuma and, after the main forces of both corps were relocated to them, to capture the island of Sarema, which was defended by the largest enemy forces, with a blow from two directions. Manage expected in a week.

For unknown reasons, a unified command was not organized for the period of the operation, which made it difficult to resolve management and logistics issues. General Starikov, who was subordinate to Marshal Govorov, was responsible for directing the combat operations of his army on land. Rear Admiral I.G., Chief of Staff of the Baltic Fleet Squadron Svyatov, who received instructions from Admiral Tributs, was the commander at sea and was responsible for the landing of troops and equipment, their supply through the strait and protection from the opposition of the German fleet. The relationship between the land and naval commanders was built "on the principle of close interaction between the army and navy."

Since the tenders did not have time to arrive at the beginning of the operation, boats and amphibious vehicles had to be used for the first landing, and sapper pontoons were used to transport tanks.

The day before, two reconnaissance groups were landed on Mukha, which reported that there were few German troops on the island and the defense was not organized. The state of the sea and cloudy weather favored the landing. Taking into account the situation, it was decided to immediately start the operation.

On the evening of September 29, the torpedo boats received the advanced battalion of the 249th Infantry Division in Virtsu with several mortars and 45-mm guns and headed at full speed to the village of Kuivastu on the island of Muhu. The artillery of the corps opened heavy fire across the strait at the intended bridgehead. The strait of the boats was crossed in 20 minutes. The boats from Virtsu were followed by 96 amphibians with another rifle battalion. The landing of the advance detachment, numbering 1150 fighters, began at 20.30. The main forces of the first echelon were landed on both sides of the Kuivastu pier and somewhat to the north. This area was defended by an enemy infantry company. Her resistance was quickly crushed, by midnight the Soviet units took possession of the pier and began to advance towards the village of Muhu.

Torpedo boats began to transfer troops, some of the boats towed army pontoons with tanks and reinforcements. By noon on September 30, 5600 soldiers and officers of the 249th Infantry Division, 24 guns, 23 mortars and four tanks were delivered to the captured bridgehead.

The Germans, who were on the island no more than 500 people, stubbornly resisted for some time, and on the evening of September 30 retreated to Sarema Island along the Orissar dam, blowing it up in several places. Thanks to the minimal operational pause between the Soviet troops on the coast and the moment of landing, the first victory was achieved relatively easily. The transfer of the remaining forces of the Estonian corps and two long-range naval batteries began to Mukha.

The landing on the island of Khiuma was planned to be carried out at 6 o'clock on October 1 on two

areas near Cape Helterma and Cape Tyakhvanin. To develop success was supposed to be a blow to the rear of the enemy by part of the forces of the Marine Corps brigade landed on the Kardel sector. The landing party had to overcome a water barrier about 12 miles wide. The weather was not favorable for the landing, and it had to be postponed for a day.

On the night of October 2, the torpedo boats failed to land a reconnaissance group near Helterm due to strong fire opposition. In the morning, the called attack aircraft of the 13th Air Army dealt a blow to it. At 8.30, the boats of the southern group, which left Rohukul, covered themselves with a smoke screen, broke through the enemy barrage at maximum speed and landed a detachment of 635 people in the Helterm harbor, and then proceeded to transport the 109th rifle corps. The northern group of landing craft also transferred troops here, which were supposed to land at Cape Tyakhvanin. The rapid build-up of the forces of the first throw stunned the Germans, and they began to move away from the pier. An hour after the landing of the first throw, the landing of the first echelon of troops and reinforcements as part of the artillery regiment began. By evening, the whole division was already on the island. Soviet attack aircraft hung continuously in the air, supporting the infantry and suppressing firing points. Four high-speed barges of the enemy tried to fire on the landing force from the Kassar reach, but attacked by aircraft and torpedo boats were forced to retreat.

The Germans retreated to the dam on the island of Kassar and to Oryaku Bay, and on the night of October 3, they evacuated their main forces to Sarema. For some time the enemy still held a small area on the southern tip of the island, but by the end of October 3, the landed troops completely captured Khium.

Favorable conditions were created for the liberation of the largest island of the archipelago, Sarem. The troops of the 8th Army were concentrated: the 8th Estonian Corps - on the island of Muhu and in the Virtsu region; 109th Rifle Corps - one division in Khiuma and one division in Rohukula. In order not to lose momentum and make it difficult for the enemy to defend, Admiral Svyatov and General Starikov outlined the following plan of action: to carry out the invasion of Sarem at dawn on October 5; the main blow is delivered by the Estonian corps from the island of Muhu, crossing the strait on amphibians, army pontoons and along the Orissar dam; The 109th Rifle Corps makes a landing at the same time in Talika and Trigi and delivers an auxiliary strike from the north and northeast. The second auxiliary strike was to be carried out by landing on the southwestern tip of Sarema Island in the area of Cape Keyguste, with the task of intercepting the Muhu-Kuressare highway. This landing, consisting of one Estonian battalion, was transferred on torpedo boats. One day was allotted to prepare for the invasion.

By this time, the enemy had reinforced the garrison of the 218th Infantry Division. Parts from the islands of Muhu and Khiuma also crossed here. The most landing-accessible points of the coast were covered by defensive structures.

An hour before dawn on October 5, the artillery of the 8th Estonian Corps began artillery preparation, unleashing a flurry of fire on enemy positions in the area of the proposed landing and at the Orissar dam. At the same time, assault battalions on 70 amphibians began crossing the Väike-Väin Strait.

At the same time, the first landing of the 131st Rifle Division, Major General Romanenko, approached the island from Rohukul. The Germans were expecting an attack from this direction and especially heavily fortified the Trigi and Talika piers, but God was on the side of the Russians that day. Due to a dead reckoning error, the boats did not reach Talik and began landing on an unequipped shore, where, as it turned out, the enemy had no defense at all. As a result, the first landing, consisting of 250 fighters, was landed without loss. The assault battalions, once on the shore, with a swift blow to the flank crushed the defending units of the Germans and threw them away from Talik. Through

hour, the landing of the main forces of the Romanenko division began. At 0930, the entire first echelon of the landing—two infantry regiments with 56 guns—was on the shore and occupied a bridgehead measuring 4 km along the front and 3-4 km in depth.

The troops of the Estonian corps, having crossed the strait, attacked the Orissar dam from the rear and captured it. In a short time, sappers restored the destroyed part of the dam, and the main body of the corps began to quickly cross it and develop an offensive to the west. By the end of the day, the second echelon of the 109th Rifle Corps was landed in the Talik area, which also rushed to the west, breaking the resistance of the German 23rd Infantry Division and the Ostland battalion. The enemy was forced to hastily withdraw into the interior of the island towards Kuressara. By the end of the day, parts of the two landing forces united and created a united front of the offensive. The landing in Keyguste Bay was not carried out due to the lack of fuel for torpedo boats.

In the evening, after listening to a telephone report on the successful development of the operation, Govorov ordered on October 6 to completely clear the island of the enemy, install long-range artillery on its southern tip and prevent enemy transports from passing through the Irben Strait to Riga.

All the forces of the fleet concentrated on the transfer of troops and equipment. Tanks and self-propelled guns were transferred from Virtsu to Kuivastu with the help of a 200-ton pontoon that received 6-8 vehicles. Then, through the dam, the tanks followed their course towards Sarem to the place of fighting. Air support was provided by the 9th and 11th Assault Aviation Divisions. However, the pace of advance slowed down. The enemy's defense front was shrinking, the density of battle formations and firepower was increasing, and resistance was growing. By the evening of October 7, units of the Estonian corps captured Kuressare, but, exhausted by eight-day battles, lingered in the city until the morning and did not pursue the enemy at night, which allowed him to break away and take up defense on the Syrve peninsula. Given its exceptional importance for covering the sea approaches to the Courland Peninsula and the Riga bridgehead, the Germans prepared the defense of Syrve in advance by creating five lanes using pre-war Soviet fortifications.

Attempts to break through this defense in depth on October 10-14 were unsuccessful. The second assault, undertaken on October 19-23, also failed. On a 3 km long front, the Germans installed 423 artillery pieces and 116 mortars, anti-tank gouges, and thick minefields. In frontal attacks, Soviet troops suffered significant losses. After listening to reports on the current situation, Marshal Govorov ordered to stop the attacks and prepare a competent breakthrough with preliminary reconnaissance and concentration of forces.

Preparations for the decisive defeat of the Germans on the Syrve Peninsula took almost a month. The struggle took on a positional character. Soviet attacks were replaced by enemy counterattacks. Two attempts were made to land tactical landings on the Germans' flank, but both were unsuccessful.

During this period, the Germans transferred a penal battalion, a regiment of the 215th Infantry Division and other units to the Syrva, and also introduced light fleet forces into the Irben Strait: self-propelled barges, torpedo boats, destroyers and cruisers. Large artillery ships repeatedly fired on Soviet troops from the sea. The ground units reacted very painfully to this, since they had nothing to answer, and bad weather did not always allow aviation to detect and attack the enemy. I had to urgently transfer to Sarem the 18th mobile coastal artillery division, which was armed with 130-mm guns. In total, in October, ensuring the regrouping and concentration of troops, the Baltic Fleet transferred 74 thousand soldiers and officers, 150 tanks and self-propelled guns, 730 guns and 530 mortars, 3 thousand vehicles and 43 thousand tons of various cargoes.

On November 15, the 8th Army and parts of the Navy were ready for the final stage of the operation: for every kilometer of the front that had to be broken through, there were now 224 artillery and mortar barrels, 120 tanks and self-propelled guns. However, stormy and non-flying weather did not allow the use of aircraft and boats. Finally, at 10 o'clock on November 18, 925 barrels of army and naval coastal artillery opened fire on enemy firing positions and shelters, they were joined by 3 gunboats and 8 armored boats, as well as bomber and assault aircraft. Fire training lasted an hour and a half. At 12 o'clock, the infantry units, supported by military and naval artillery, tanks and self-propelled guns, overcoming the fierce resistance of the enemy, began to move deep into the Syrve peninsula. The Germans held out for six days. On November 21, under the cover of naval artillery fire, they began the evacuation of the garrison from the Syrve Peninsula to Vindava. On November 24, the Moonsund Islands were entirely in Soviet hands.

The liberation of the archipelago was of great importance: the ships of the Baltic Fleet were able to control the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Riga, which created a direct threat to the left flank of the German troops; The Baltic Fleet was given the opportunity to deploy active operations against enemy communications in the middle and southern parts of the Baltic Sea.

This ended the Baltic offensive operation, as a result of which the enemy grouping in the Baltic lost its strategic importance. Of the 59 formations that were there by the beginning of the offensive of the Soviet troops, 26 were defeated, and the rest were isolated in Courland and blocked in the Klaipeda region. The length of the front line in the Baltic sector was reduced to 250 km, which made it possible to release significant forces of Soviet troops. The losses of four Soviet fronts from September 14 to November 24 amounted to 280 thousand people killed and wounded, 522 tanks, 2593 guns and 779 aircraft.

"Thus, as a result of the eighth Stalinist strike ... the Estonian SSR and most of the Latvian SSR were completely liberated. Finland withdrew from the war against the USSR and declared war on Germany. In addition, with the defeat of the Baltic grouping of the enemy, the subsequent offensive of the Soviet troops in East Prussia was greatly facilitated.

However, a large group of the Wehrmacht remained in Latvia and fettered ten Soviet armies. Therefore, General of the Sandal Army writes: "And yet, personally, I still have a residue of dissatisfaction. And after more than two decades, when our mistakes and miscalculations became clearer, more understandable, it is especially annoying to remember that we were not able to fully complete the planned operation.

On November 30, Stavka, in anticipation of a major offensive by the Red Army on

In the western direction, it decided to withdraw the 61st, 2nd Guards and 5th Guards Tank Armies from the 1st Baltic Front to the reserve. The 3rd shock army was taken from Eremenko. Seven armies remained on the "Courland front".

"KURLIAND FRONT"

"Having reliably blocked the enemy troops," Marshal Vasilevsky reports, "we did not waste gunpowder on them, did not bear casualties: we left them to themselves until the group capitulated." It's even embarrassing to say, but dear Alexander

Mikhailovich is simply lying. Offensive operations on the peninsula did not stop until the end of the war, and Marshal Vasilevsky repeatedly traveled to the Baltic fronts to control the process. According to Stalin, "leaving a strategic bridgehead to the enemy in the rear of our advancing fronts was unacceptable." And besides, the Soviet high command believed that it was necessary to constantly conduct active offensive operations in order to prevent the transfer of Army Group North from Latvia to Germany; this is Hitler's calculation

turned out to be accurate.

Decisive attempts to eliminate the German troops in Courland were made at least four more times.

On December 21, General Eremenko, with four armies, in which there were 36 rifle divisions and 2 fortified areas, began an operation to encircle and defeat the enemy in the area northwest of Saldus. The idea was to deliver two flank concentric strikes by the forces of the 1st Shock and 22nd Armies on the right wing of the front and the 42nd and 10th Guards on the left. By the end of the third day of the operation, the army was to reach the line on both sides of Saldus.

In front of the 2nd Baltic Front, 13 infantry divisions operated in the first line, and an enemy tank division in the second line. By this time, the Germans had further improved the system of defensive structures.

At 10 o'clock artillery and aviation preparation began, at 11.20 the troops of the 42nd and 10th Guards armies went on the attack with adjacent flanks. By 14 o'clock they broke through the first position and went to the second. By 1500 the Germans had brought up the reserves and tanks of the 12th Panzer Division. As a result of stubborn battles, by the end of the day, units of General Kazakov managed to wedge into the second position in one sector. The advance of General Sviridov's 42nd Army was even less. In general, Soviet troops in the breakthrough sector advanced 1-3 km.

On December 23, after reconnaissance in battle, the 1st shock and 22nd armies went on the offensive. Immediately they had to overcome numerous minefields, engineering barriers and increasing enemy resistance. The Germans constantly counterattacked, supported by the massive fire of their artillery and assault guns. Nevertheless, the first position, which consisted of three trenches, was completely broken through, and the attackers advanced to a depth of 3 km. The next day, the 19th Panzer Corps was brought into battle, but it could not overcome the enemy's resistance.

In the strip of the 1st Baltic Front - the 6th Guards, 51st, 4th shock armies - events developed according to the same scenario.

Until the New Year, 1945, an "offensive on the spot" was conducted. The enemy, taking advantage of the high density and echeloning of his troops in the defense, easily and quickly maneuvered units, transferring them through internal communications from passive sectors to threatened directions. During the operation, the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front from December 21 to 30 managed to advance only 5-10 km, the 1st Baltic - 10-15 km.

The command of the Army Group "North" also tried to conduct active operations. From January 5 to 9, 1945, Shermer launched a counteroffensive along the entire front, trying to regain lost positions and, despite Soviet superiority, especially in tanks and artillery, managed to push the 6th Guards and 22nd armies. General Becker struck from Klaipeda, broke through the positions of the 43rd Army, and was driven back only by January 12.

After that, Bagramyan decided that it was time to come to grips with the German garrison in

Klaipeda. Due to the fact that Beloborodov's army was withdrawn from the front to participate in the East Prussian operation, the solution of this task was entrusted to the 4th shock army of General Malyshev. Chistyakov and Kreizer were to inflict pinching blows on the Courland grouping. Vasilevsky approved the plan.

In January, great changes took place within the Courland grouping. Hiding behind offensive actions, the Germans withdrew from the peninsula in the first half of the month the 4th Panzer and three infantry divisions, as well as the 3rd SS Panzer Corps, the Latvian and Estonian grenadier divisions. In total, ten of the most combat-ready divisions were evacuated by the beginning of March.

Comrade Stalin was very dissatisfied.

To prevent a possible further transfer of formations from Courland to the Reich, the troops of the 1st and 2nd Baltic Fronts on January 23 again went on the offensive. The previous scenario was repeated exactly: for every attack of the Soviet divisions, "the Nazis responded with frenzied counterattacks" and, maneuvering with reserves, eliminated the breakthroughs. As a result, there were no significant changes in the position of the warring parties.

On January 26, Army Group North was renamed Army Group Courland. General Gilpert became its commander. On the same day, General Malyshev, with two rifle corps, which had 56 thousand fighters, with the support of aviation of the 3rd and 15th air armies, launched an assault on Klaipeda and on January 28 captured the city and port. Judging by the fact that in November 1944, General Beloborodov was forced to stop attacks on the Klaipeda forts due to the lack of weapons of special power and the front headquarters agreed with him, and in January 1945 Malyshev took the city in three days, losing 403 people killed and about 1000 wounded, the Germans simply left a barrier and evacuated the garrison. By the way, Bagramyan also mentions numerous explosions in Klaipeda, which testify to the "preparation of the Nazis to flee."

By the same time, in East Prussia, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front reached Königsberg. The German group, locked in Courland, completely lost its operational significance. But the Supreme was not going to leave her alone. The task of the Soviet troops remained the same: to prevent the transfer of forces to Germany. The Baltic Fleet in this case, like throughout the war, was helpless.

In early February, the Headquarters decided to combine the troops of the two fronts into one - the 2nd Baltic, consisting of the 1st and 4th shock, 6th and 10th guards, 22nd, 42nd, 51st combined arms and 15th air armies, 10th tank and 3rd mechanized corps, in which there were about half a million soldiers and officers. Marshal Govorov was appointed commander. At the same time, he remained the commander of the Leningrad Front. Generals Eremenko and Bagramyan left for other directions. Govorov received a clear order: to inflict strong blows on the enemy one after another, split his grouping into pieces and destroy it.

On February 26, the Courland operation began, which lasted until the end of the war. The fighting was of an exceptionally difficult nature, the front was considered secondary, and they frankly saved on it in equipment and ammunition. The stamina of the enemy remained unchanged, to split the Courland grouping and go to

Liepaja did not succeed. I couldn't even get to Saldus. General Chistyakov recalls: "...every day we went forward only a kilometer. But even that was a major achievement for us." Let's add: every day the front lost up to 2 thousand people. And after the fall of Berlin, when it was clear to everyone that no one would be transferring any troops anywhere, that the Third Reich collapsed, Govorov continued to drive

armies into battle. On May 6, having information that an act of signing the unconditional surrender of Germany would take place in two days, the marshal authorized the start of a new offensive for that day in order to force the Kurland group to capitulate. On the morning of May 8, 1945, when Zhukov put on his full dress uniform with all the regalia, the 2nd Baltic Front (formally from April 1 it became known as the Leningrad Front) again went on the attack and "the enemy defended himself with the same stubbornness, even counterattacking in some directions." At 2 pm Army Group Courland, which numbered about 20 divisions, disciplinedly hung out white flags. 280 thousand people surrendered.

Under the leadership of Govorov, the front lost more than 30 thousand killed and 130 thousand wounded.

According to Vasilevsky, this is called "do not waste gunpowder" and "do not bear sacrifices."

The total losses of the Red Army during the liberation of the Baltic states amounted, according to official figures, to more than 1,460,000 military personnel, including 334,478 killed and dead.

Real liberators do not deprive the people of their statehood, do not destroy their culture, do not make of them the "Aryan race" or "builders of communism", do not pursue a policy of Germanization or Russification.

In 1940, the Red Army came to the sovereign Baltic countries for the first time and declared them Soviet republics. The occupation was presented as a popular revolution. The annexation process was accompanied by rampant mass terror. Sovietization was carried out at an accelerated pace. First of all, as usual, "alien classes" were destroyed, then "enemies of the people" and so on and so forth. One year before the arrival of the Germans, the "organs", working in the Stakhanov style, managed to do a lot. At the same time they brought the population to all-Union poverty: they nationalized everything, confiscated and canceled the national money.

Therefore, a warm welcome awaited the Wehrmacht troops, the Soviet Estonian rifle corps fled and enlisted in the Estonian SS division, the population of Soviet saboteurs thrown into the Baltics met with hostility and willingly handed them over to the authorities. Communist authors are outraged that the Lithuanians and Latvians, who were made happy by Soviet power, did not have the moral right to cooperate with the Nazis, because they "on June 22, 1941 were citizens of the USSR." With this approach, it can be justified that Belarusians, Ukrainians or the same Balts managed to become citizens of the Third Reich during the three years of German occupation.

The return of the Red Army in 1944 for the majority of Lithuanians, Estonians and Latvians meant that one occupier had replaced another. The terror that unfolded after the "liberation" was in no way inferior to the Nazi one. In Latvia alone, and in just one year, 43,000 citizens were deported. The Chekists had to fight hard with the "forest brothers" until the beginning of the 50s. In the 1970s, Estonians were considered a dying nation and made up less than 40 percent of the republic's population. In the end, even members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU got tired of living in "developed socialism", and the former "fraternal peoples" parted without regrets.

If the Soviet troops had left the Baltic states in 1947, then today they could rightfully call themselves liberators, and Russia would have friendly neighbors. Indeed, during the years of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had the most normal relations with Austria and Finland, from the occupation and Sovietization of which Stalin

decided to abstain. Today we have NATO member countries close by, and monuments are erected there to the volunteers of the Waffen-Grenadier SS divisions.

NINTH STALIN IMPACT

“... The Soviet Army carried out on the territory of Hungary in October-December by the troops of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts with the assistance of the Danube military flotilla. The troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front, using the successes of Stalin's sixth strike, already in September overcame the foothills of the Carpathians and reached the borders of Czechoslovakia on a broad front from the north and east. By this time, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, destroying the remnants of German troops on the territory of Romania and Bulgaria, approached the eastern borders of Hungary and Yugoslavia. Having launched a decisive offensive in early October, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front crossed the Romanian-Hungarian border on a wide front and by the end of October reached the Tisza River, completed the cleansing of the territory of Transylvania and captured its capital, the city of Cluj. The troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front crossed the Carpathian Range in mid-October and, having penetrated deeply into the territory of friendly Czechoslovakia, opened the way for an offensive between the Tisza and the Carpathians. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front successfully carried out an operation to defeat the fascist troops in Yugoslavia and occupied Belgrade on October 20. The first stage of the ninth Stalinist attack ended with the exit of Soviet troops to the Tisza River from Uzhgorod to its confluence with the Danube. The second stage began in Hungary in the last days of October with a powerful offensive by the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the Budapest direction in the interfluvium of the Tisza and the Danube.

The German leadership attached particular importance to holding the territories of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Balkan countries, which is explained by both economic and military-strategic reasons.

After the loss of Romanian oil, Germany was in dire need of fuel from Hungary, as well as other strategic raw materials from the Balkans. Czechoslovakia, with its powerful factories, was a supplier of many types of weapons and military equipment for the Wehrmacht. The loss of the Balkans threatened to cut off Army Group E in Greece and exposed the southern strategic flank of the German troops. This allowed the Red Army to deliver coordinated strikes against the Wehrmacht from two directions - east and south.

By the end of September 1944, the German command concentrated large forces in Slovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia. On the front from the Dukla Pass in the Carpathians to the Bulgarian-Greek border with a length of over 1500 km, part of the forces of the Northern Ukraine Army Group, the troops of the Southern Ukraine Army Group, Army Groups F and E were defending. They were supported by the 4th Air Fleet. Using the mountainous nature of the theater of operations, the Germans created strong defensive lines.

As a result of the defeat of a large enemy grouping in the Iasi-Kishinev operation, the occupation of Romania and Bulgaria by Soviet troops, the situation in the Balkans changed radically. In September, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were at the borders of Yugoslavia and Hungary. The goal of the further Soviet offensive was to defeat the right wing of the Northern Army Group.

Ukraine" and the troops of Army Group "F", cut off the escape routes of Army Group "E", withdraw Hungary from the war, the last ally of Germany in "Europe, assist Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in liberation from the invaders and go directly to the borders of the Reich from the south. Decision these tasks were assigned to the troops of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts. Czechoslovak,

Romanian, Bulgarian troops, who were under the operational subordination of the Soviet command, and the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia also participated in the operations. troops were supported by the 2nd, 8th, 5th and 17th air armies.

They had to break into the heavily fortified defenses of the German troops, overcome difficult mountain passes, and cross numerous rivers.

By the autumn of 1944, stormy events were brewing in Slovakia.

"Because of the Carpathian Mountains," writes General K.V. Krainyukov, "the news penetrated that the anti-fascist struggle of the working masses, led by the underground Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, was intensifying in Slovakia, that a revolutionary explosion was brewing in the country." Maybe the general really caught the news "because of the Carpathian Mountains", but the Kremlin had all the information first-hand, since the main figures of the "underground Communist Party" lived in Moscow.

After the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938, the signing of the Munich Agreement and the dismemberment of the republics of the Czech Republic and Moravia, they became a German protectorate, and on the territory of Slovakia, under the auspices of the Third Reich, a vassal Slovak state emerged, headed by Josef Tiso. The nationalists who came to power managed to win over the bulk of the population and part of the democratic political movements, promoting the creation of the Slovak state as their own success, which was perceived as the lesser evil in comparison with the real alternative to being occupied by Germany or Hungary. The slogan "For Soviet Slovakia!" put forward by the Communist Party of Slovakia at the direction of the Comintern! for real-minded people at that moment caused only bewilderment. In addition, the Slovak communists disciplinedly supported the Soviet-German pact of 1939, after which everyone turned away from the communists. They found themselves in such dead isolation that in 1939-1941 the security service of the Slovak state did not even consider it necessary to put them in prison. Julius Fucik noted on this occasion that the Czech and Slovak communists found themselves underground before their own people.

On June 23, 1941, "independent" Slovakia declared war on the USSR, placing 2.5 divisions at the disposal of the German command, and prominent communists left for Moscow.

On December 12, 1943, the Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Assistance and Post-War Cooperation was signed between the Soviet government and the emigrant government of Czechoslovakia. In accordance with the treaty, the Soviet Union recognized Czechoslovakia within the pre-Munich borders and undertook to assist her in the fight against the Nazis. At the same time, the formation of the Czechoslovak Corps began.

To organize the resistance movement in Czechoslovakia itself, leading "comrades" from Moscow were repeatedly thrown into its territory, who invariably and quickly ended up behind bars. Finally, in August 1943, the new emissary Karol Schmidka managed to form the fifth underground Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia and convey the instructions of the Comintern and the Moscow leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia: to launch active forms of anti-fascist struggle up to the preparation of an armed uprising. Soon a national center of resistance was created - the Slovak National Council, in

which on an equal footing, in addition to the communists, included representatives of various parties and organizations opposed to the regime.

The defeats of the Wehrmacht, the approach of the Red Army to the borders of Slovakia, the allied air raids, the robbery of the country by Germany sharply intensified the crisis of the Tiso regime and so intensified the Resistance movement that the question arose of a widespread uprising involving part of the Slovak army. One by one, the pillars that supported the official state propaganda collapsed. Some of the senior officers of the Slovak army during this period established ties with the Czechoslovak government of Beneš in London, which made it a condition for their support for the uprising to recognize the restoration of a unified Czechoslovak state after the war. The plan provided for two options: according to the first, the uprising began in the event of the occupation of Slovakia by German troops, according to the second, with the approach of the Red Army to the borders of the country and further mutual actions.

From the first days of the creation of the National Council, there were disagreements in it regarding the leadership of the liberation struggle and the post-war organization.

So, the command of the Slovak army was guided by the London government. On June 15, 1944, Colonel Golian, who headed the Military Center under the Slovak National Council, wrote to London: "We do not want to go over to the Russians. Acting jointly with them, we first of all expect to liberate Slovakia, and then render possible assistance in the liberation of the Czech lands. Therefore, negotiate with the Russians so that they recognize our army as an allied army (as an integral part of the Czechoslovak army), so that they do not take prisoners and disarm our units, so that we are given the opportunity to conclude an agreement on joint actions with them.

And on August 6, 1944, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and one of the chairmen of the SNS, Schmidke, who arrived in Moscow to coordinate actions, submitted to the Soviet leadership a note "On the development of the situation in Slovakia," which, in particular, stated: "We want to become an integral part of the USSR. Everything else is just speculation, something indefinite, the meaning of which is not clear. If today it were possible to determine by voting which state the Slovaks want to enter, then 70% of them would vote for joining the USSR, 20% would vote for a renewed Czechoslovak Republic, the rest are frightened by everything and cannot decide."

The Soviet partisan commanders, P.A. Velichko, A.S. Egorov, E.P. Volyansky and others.

At the request of the Foreign (Moscow) leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and with the sanction of the Kremlin in the summer of 1944, the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement sent 24 partisan organizing groups to Slovakia, numbering several hundred people, quickly replenished with Slovak volunteers and defectors from state structures. Encouraged by the reception of the local population and the ease of military success, the partisans launched an active activity.

The leaders of the Slovak National Committee feared, not unreasonably, that the excessive activity of the partisans would hasten the occupation of Slovakia by the Germans. On August 21, Gustav Husak met with Velichko and asked him to calm down his "bombers" so as not to prematurely start uprisings without coordinating actions with the Red Army, not to blow up bridges and tunnels in vain, which no one in Slovakia guarded and which could well be useful to both the rebels and the Soviet troops. Velichko, referring to the orders of his command, continued to frolic with impunity in a foreign land. Husak later recalled: "Neither with Velichko, nor with other commanders, we could not agree. After every successful

performances their appetite increased. Indeed, their performances were successful, because there was no enemy, the Slovak administration did nothing against them, the Germans were only civilians on the territory of Slovakia. The partisans were harvesting the crops we had sown with hard work, and they believed that it was precisely

they awakened Slovakia."

Losing influence in the army every day and not having enough strength to fight the partisans, President Tiso turned to the leadership of Germany with a proposal to send troops into the country. In the last days of August, the advance of the German army from Moravia, southern Poland and Austria to Slovakia began. The invasion, which began on August 29, served as the signal for the start of a nationwide uprising. By the evening of August 30, two-thirds of the country's territory was under the control of the rebels and partisans. The political headquarters of the uprising was the city of Banska Bystrica, where the Military Center was located and where the members of the Slovak National Council arrived, who announced on September 1 that they had taken legislative and executive power into their own hands and mobilized men aged 18 to 40 into the army. Of the 42,000-strong Tisovo army, 18,000 soldiers and officers immediately went over to the side of the rebels. In a short time, the number of the rebel army reached 47 thousand people, significantly outnumbering the German troops and inferior to them in terms of quality and equipment.

The uprising began in an extremely disadvantageous situation and not at the right time. The Red Army was 50 km from the Carpathians and managed to abandon the idea of climbing the mountains, so

How
the successful advance of Malinovsky's troops from the south to the rear of the Carpathian grouping of the enemy opened up the prospect of entering Slovakia by a roundabout maneuver, without overcoming the Eastern Carpathians and storming the passes of the east. Therefore, on August 26, the Headquarters instructed the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front, General Petrov, to switch to a tough defense. However, the situation has changed dramatically.

On August 31, Firlinger, the envoy of Czechoslovakia to the USSR, and the head of the Czechoslovak military mission, through Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs A. Vyshinsky, appealed to the Soviet government with a request to provide urgent military assistance to the Slovak people.

On September 2, Marshal Konev sent a report to Stalin about the flight on August 30 to the Soviet side of a group of 27 Slovak aircraft. Among the officers who arrived was the deputy commander of the East Slovak corps, Colonel William Talsky. Having familiarized the front command with the situation in Slovakia, he stated that in the event of an offensive by Soviet troops in the western direction, the 1st and 2nd Slovak divisions located on the Czechoslovak-Polish border could advance on Krosno, towards them, and ensure the capture of Lupkovsky and Dukla passes.

EAST CARPATHIAN OPERATION

Having received Konev's message, the Supreme Commander gave a directive to carry out the East Carpathian operation, during which the troops of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts were to cross the Carpathians along the shortest path, break through to the border of Slovakia and connect with the Slovak troops. The Headquarters assigned the troops of Malinovsky the task of capturing the Transylvanian Alps, reaching the Satu Mare region and thereby assisting the 4th Ukrainian Front in overcoming the Carpathians and capturing the Uzhgorod, Chop, and Mukachevo regions.

Already on September 4, Marshal Konev gave an operational directive for the operation. In accordance with his decision, the 38th Army of General K.S. Moskalenko, reinforced by the 25th Tank, 1st Guards Cavalry, 1st Czechoslovak

army corps, the 17th breakthrough artillery division and two tank brigades, was supposed to break through the enemy defenses on an 8-kilometer stretch and develop an offensive on Presov. The main blow was delivered by the army along the highway running from Krosno through Dukla to the Dukla Pass. It was the shortest way to Slovakia. The offensive here ensured the capture of important communications and allowed the troops to reach the southern slopes of the Carpathians to cut off the main routes of the 1st

German tank army, linking it with the main forces of the Northern Ukraine group.

The entire operation was planned to a depth of 90-95 km and a duration of five days. To support the troops in the breakthrough sector, an artillery density of up to 200 guns and mortars per kilometer was created. The artillery preparation was planned to last 2 hours 05 minutes. From the air, the actions of the 38th Army were provided by part of the forces of the 2nd Air Army of General S.A. Krasovsky.

By decision of General Petrov, the main blow at the junction of fronts was delivered by the 1st Guards Army of General A.A. Grechko on a 4-kilometer section in the general direction of Comancha. The density of artillery here was brought up to 100 barrels per kilometer.

The Soviet troops had to advance in difficult conditions through the Eastern Beskids - a chain of mountains, in many places covered with forests. The Dukla Pass, located at an altitude of 502 meters above sea level, through which the Krosno-Preshov highway passes, was considered the most accessible for the advancement of troops. The Eastern Beskids abound in rivers flowing in the north into the Vistula and in the south into the Danube. Their channels lie in deep rocky gorges. There was only one road on the northern slopes of the Carpathians.

The preparation of the operation was associated with significant difficulties. By the end of August, the troops of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts, having completed a long offensive operation, had a large shortage in personnel and military equipment, and needed rest. Formations and units had a limited supply of materiel. The troops had no experience in conducting military operations in the mountains, with the exception of the 3rd mountain rifle corps that arrived from the Crimea, which, by the way, was not planned to participate in the operation, were not provided with mountain equipment.

Thus, the troops of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts faced a very difficult task. The German leadership sought to keep Slovakia at all costs, considering it as a barrier on the way of the Red Army to the industrial regions of the Czech Republic, Moravia, Hungary and South-Eastern Poland. The German command clearly understood that overcoming the narrowest part of the Main Carpathian Range by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front would lead to their rapid breakthrough into Czechoslovakia and the Hungarian lowland and to the connection with the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front advancing from Northern Romania. In addition, the entry of Soviet troops through Slovakia into Hungary created a direct threat to the southern regions of Germany itself. Therefore, the Germans concentrated a large grouping of troops here and, using the system of parallel ridges of the Carpathian Mountains, built a deep and strong defense in all the most important directions. It was based on fortified areas echeloned to a depth of 60 km, covered at intervals by field-type engineering structures, minefields, gouges and barbed wire.

The offensive of the troops of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts was initially deployed in a narrow sector, then the width of its strip reached several hundred kilometers. Two armies did not manage to do it, and in five days they also did not meet. Two operations had to be carried out: the Carpathian-Dukla and the Carpathian-Uzhgorod.

In total, three combined arms armies, two separate rifle, one tank and one cavalry corps with reinforcements took part in the operation. They consisted of 33 divisions, 3 infantry and 3 separate tank brigades. The actions of the ground forces were provided by the aviation of two air armies. In total, by the beginning of the operation, the troops numbered 378 thousand people, 5140 guns and mortars, 322 tanks and self-propelled guns and 1165 combat aircraft. More additional forces were added later.

This happened due to the fact that the Soviet troops did not receive any help from the Slovaks in mastering the passes. The indecision and hesitation of the command of the Slovak army allowed the Germans to disarm the garrisons in large cities within a few days, as well as the East Slovak corps, which was supposed to come into contact with the Soviet troops.

The forces of the two fronts were opposed by the 1st German tank and 1st Hungarian armies. They had 10 German, 8 Hungarian divisions and 2 Hungarian mountain rifle brigades, in which there were about 300 thousand people, 3250 guns and mortars, up to 100 tanks and assault guns and 450 aircraft.

The Carpathian-Dukla operation began on the morning of September 8. After artillery preparation and air strikes, the main forces of the 38th Army, which included 9 rifle divisions, broke through the enemy defenses and advanced 12 km in the direction of the Dukla Pass during the day. Three infantry divisions of the Germans operated in front of the army front.

To develop success, the 25th tank corps of General F.G. began to be introduced into the battle. Anikushkin, the cavalry corps of General V.K. Baranov and the 1st Czechoslovak Corps. However, this did not give the desired result, by the end of the day the enemy's resistance increased significantly. Tank formations, numbering 108 armored units, advanced along the roads in columns, lost maneuverability and penetrating power and suffered heavy losses. In an effort to prevent Soviet troops from entering the territory of Slovakia at any cost, the German command began to hastily transfer reinforcements from other directions to the breakthrough zone - the 1st tank and 75th infantry, units of the 208th division, as well as individual units operating against the rebels. The 8th Panzer Division was advancing here from the Krakow area. These regroupings in the zone of the 38th Army weakened the German pressure on the areas of the uprising in Slovakia, but the enemy managed to take a new defensive line 6-12 km from the main line of defense and on September 9 delayed the advance of the Soviet and Czechoslovak units.

The Czechoslovak corps, which had been in reserve for a long time, acted extremely unsuccessfully. "The deployment of the corps was disorganized," recalls Konev. There was confusion in the units that came under long-range artillery fire. The commander of the corps, General J. Kratochvil, did not organize the command and control of the corps' troops at the time of their entry into battle. Moreover, he himself was 25 km from the battlefield and, oddly enough, held a press conference with foreign journalists at his headquarters ... a corps well-equipped with personnel, weapons and military equipment, due to the personal disorganization of Ya. From the very first hours of entering the battle, Kratochvila was put in a difficult position. The enraged marshal, right on the battlefield, decided to release the interviewer from his post and appoint the commander of the 1st Czechoslovak brigade, General Ludwig Svoboda, in his place. Stalin approved the decision. For inability to lead the troops, General Anikushkin was also removed from command, Colonel V.G. became commander of the 25th Tank Corps. Petrovsky.

On the second day of the offensive, they managed to advance 2-6 km. started

fighting in mountainous conditions, where passages and roads were of primary importance for the advancing troops.

On the morning of September 10, the enemy launched a series of counterattacks along the right flank with the forces of the 1st Panzer Division and infantry units. To repel them, the front commander reinforced the flank with anti-tank artillery and transferred the 4th Guards Kantemirovsky Tank Corps, General P.P., from his reserve, to Moskalenko. Poluboyarova - 103 T-34 tanks, 28 ISs and 12 SU-85 self-propelled artillery mounts. The next day, the tankers, in cooperation with the 67th Rifle

corps drove the Germans out of Krosno. On the night of September 12, having groped for a passage not guarded by the Germans, the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps moved into the raid. General Baranov received the task of Konev to connect with the Slovak partisans and take command of the uprising area: "When meeting with the rebels and partisans, boldly declare yourself a red ataman - the commander of the Soviet troops operating on the territory of Slovakia." During the night, the Cossacks went deep behind enemy lines for 20 km and on September 13 crossed the Polish-Slovak border. However, things did not go further, the Germans managed to close the breakthrough, and Baranov failed to enter the operational space. Pressed from all sides by the enemy, the corps moved to all-round defense, food and ammunition were delivered to it by air. Ten days later, the cavalymen broke through back to their own; this ended the participation in the operation of the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps.

By September 14, the troops of the 38th Army advanced 23 km with battles, but they could not complete the tasks assigned to them. The German command deployed 6 infantry and 2 tank divisions in this area.

The 1st Guards Army of the 4th Ukrainian Front went on the offensive on September 9, striking in the direction of Zaguzh, Comanche. Overcoming fierce resistance, by September 14, army troops had broken through its defenses at the front up to 30 km and advanced to a depth of 15 km. And here the Germans, pulling up units from other sectors, localized the breakthrough.

Konev and Moskalenko, in order to avoid frontal attacks and go behind enemy lines defending in the Dukla area, decided to shift their efforts from the right to the left flank, where only two German infantry divisions operated. Poluboyarov's tank corps was transferred here, in which 59 T-34 tanks and 9 SU-85 self-propelled guns remained. Having regrouped and received two rifle divisions and an anti-tank brigade as reinforcements, the 38th Army launched a new attack on the morning of September 15. The Germans on the same day, with the forces of the 1st and 8th Panzer Divisions, went on the offensive against the right flank of the army. Fierce battles lasted for two days, which did not bring success to either side. On September 18, Konev handed over to the 38th Army the 31st Tank Corps of General V.E. Grigoriev, who had 58 tanks. The Germans were again attacked on the right flank; on the left, Moskalenko struck with two tank and one rifle corps and broke through the enemy defenses in the Senyava area. Through a narrow mountain pass, tankers began to go behind enemy lines, forcing him to withdraw troops. As a result of heavy fighting, the 38th Army advanced another 20 km.

The Grechko army, having received another rifle corps, resumed the offensive on September 16, and two days later, taking advantage of the weakening of the enemy grouping in its zone, the 18th army of General E.P. struck Zhuravlev. To the south, on the left flank of the front, a separate 17th Guards Rifle Corps, Major General A.I. Gostilovich.

The general offensive front expanded to 300 km. Under the blows of the 1st Guards and 18th Armies, the enemy began to retreat beyond the state border of Poland and the USSR to the passes through the Main Carpathian Range. In five days, Petrov's front advanced

to the west for 30-60 km.

Overcoming stubborn resistance and repelling counterattacks, the advanced units of Moskalenko's army, together with the Kantemirovites, broke into Duklya on September 20, an important stronghold on the only road of the enemy group.

The right-flank formations of the 1st Guards Army on the same day reached the Czechoslovak border near the village of Kalinova. The German command hastily brought up fresh forces, trying to keep the passes and roads in their hands.

On September 20-25, Soviet troops, having advanced up to 50 km, reached the Main Carpathian Range. The transfer of German troops from the territory of Slovakia

eased the position of the rebels. To assist them during September, 8 partisan groups, weapons and ammunition were thrown behind enemy lines. On the night of September 18, the Soviet command relocated a Czechoslovak fighter regiment of 20 La-5 aircraft to Slovakia at the Three Oaks airfield. On September 27, the landing on the same airfield of the 2nd airborne brigade of the 1st Czechoslovak Corps began, the units of which immediately entered the battle.

From September 26 to September 30, the troops of the 38th Army regrouped and prepared to storm the Dukla Pass. To support the infantry in the direction of the main attack, tanks and self-propelled guns of three tank corps were allocated, which were barely scraped together for one brigade. September 30 at 8.20 a short artillery preparation was made, and the troops went on the attack. The offensive developed slowly, the battles were stubborn and cruel. The pace of progress was 1-2 km per day. "It was difficult to fight in the Carpathians..." admits Marshal Konev. "In a month, the army troops advanced 50 km, and they got it at a high price."

On October 6, the Czechoslovak Corps, with the assistance of the Soviet 67th Rifle and 31st Tank Corps, captured the Duklinsky Pass.

Having occupied the pass, the Soviet and Czechoslovak troops continued the offensive, but in twenty days of fierce fighting they managed to advance only 15-20 km to the west and southwest. On the outskirts of the Ondava river valley, the offensive stalled.

The 1st Guards Army, advancing on a wide front, by October 18 overcame the Main Carpathian Range for 30 km, capturing the area of the Russian Pass; By this time, the 18th Army had occupied the Uzhoksky and Veretsky passes and advanced 5-18 km to the south. On that day, the 17th Guards Rifle Corps took Sziget on the Tisza River and came into contact with the troops of the 40th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. In the second half of October, the 4th Ukrainian Front was already fighting on the southwestern and southern slopes of the Eastern Carpathians. However, going down the mountains was no easier than going up.

Having stopped the Soviet advance, the Germans began an operation to eliminate the Slovak detachments. After the rebels rejected the ultimatum to end resistance, on October 19, German troops launched an attack on the partisan zone from several directions with four divisions, four battle groups and ten guard battalions. The assault brigade of Oberführer Dirlewanger, which became famous for the massacre of the population in Warsaw, participated in the action, elevated in status to the level of an SS division. On October 27, the punishers entered Banska Bystrica, in small groups the rebels went to the mountains. Within ten days the uprising was crushed. An occupation regime was established on Slovak territory, hundreds of patriots were executed, about 30 thousand people were sent to concentration camps.

In the second half of October, the troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front fought their way into the Uzhgorod region. There was a real possibility of encirclement of the grouping, which was defending in front of the center and the left flank of the 4th Ukrainian Front. The Germans chose to retreat. They were pursued by formations of Zhuravlev's army and the 17th separate rifle corps. On October 26, they liberated the large industrial center of Mukachevo, and the next day - Uzhgorod.

By the end of October, the troops of the 18th Army and the 17th Corps reached the Hungarian lowland throughout the entire sector of their offensive.

This ended the operation, which was carried out for political reasons, contrary to operational expediency and did not achieve its goals. In the course of it, the Red Army completely liberated Transcarpathian Ukraine and entered the territory of Slovakia; German troops lost an important strategic line.

For the Soviet side, a frontal assault on the Carpathians by troops not adapted to conduct offensive operations in the mountains cost 126,211 people killed and wounded - 30% of the original composition, 478 tanks and self-propelled guns, 962 guns and mortars, 192 aircraft.

But on the other hand, as soon as they stepped on the land of dismembered Czechoslovakia, without shelving the matter, they began to divide it according to a new one:

"With the liberation of Transcarpathian Ukraine, for the first time in its centuries-old history, its people got the opportunity to independently decide their own destiny. Held on November 26, 1944 in Mukachevo [] The Congress of Delegates of the People's Committees of Transcarpathian Ukraine adopted a historic Manifesto, expressing the will of the working people of Transcarpathian Ukraine to reunite with Soviet Ukraine. The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Republic met this desire. I wonder how if she was under German occupation until February 1945?

BELGRADE OPERATION

Events in Yugoslavia developed similarly to events in other occupied countries of Eastern Europe. On the one hand, there was the royal government in exile in London, which expected to return to leadership positions after the victory over the Nazis. On the other hand, the resistance movement grew and gained authority in the country, the leaders of which had their own opinion about the post-war state structure.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia formed the Military Committee in April 1941 to prepare and direct the struggle against the occupiers even before the surrender of the royal army. On June 27 of the same year, the General Staff of the partisan detachments was created, headed by the old Cominternist, participant in the Civil War in Russia, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPY, Josip Broz Tito. By the end of 1941, there were about 80 thousand fighters in the ranks of the Yugoslav partisans, and on December 22, the first regular military formation, the 1st Proletarian Brigade, was created in the Bosnian town of Rudu. The active fighting of the partisans forced the German command to keep a significant grouping of troops in Yugoslavia. In November 1942, the Supreme Headquarters decided to create the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NOAU) and by the end of the year 9 divisions were formed. At the same time, the Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOYU) was formed.

Other famous leaders of the Resistance were the colonel of the Yugoslav

army Draz Mihajlovic and his assistant Aleksa Djodjovich. Together with officers and soldiers who did not want to capitulate, they went into the mountains and began a partisan struggle. Mikhailovich remained loyal to the emigrated government, enjoyed its material and moral support, was promoted by the king to general and appointed minister of war. Until 1944, Churchill also relied on him.

It was not possible to establish interaction between supporters of the restoration of the old regime and adherents of the socialist idea. Mihailović's Chetniks and Tito's fighters hated each other more than the Germans.

In 1941-1943, the German command carried out six large offensive operations in order to defeat the partisan forces, but did not achieve decisive success. The partisans did not accept the frontal battles imposed on them, eluded the blows and stepped up their activities in other areas. By the end of 1943, the People's Liberation Army numbered 300 thousand people and cleared a significant part of the country from the invaders.

Thus, the communist liberation movement, which was acquiring

increasing scope, developed as an independent authoritative political and military force, resolutely unwilling to obey the instructions of the émigré government and Minister of War Mikhailovich.

Moreover, in November 1943, at the 2nd session of the AVNOJ, cardinal decisions were made: the Veche of Yugoslavia was proclaimed the supreme legislative and executive body of the country, a new government was created - the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NKOYU), chaired by Tito, the emigrant government was offered more not bother thinking about the future of the country, and King Peter P Karageorgievich was forbidden to return to the country. On December 14, 1943, the Soviet government recognized the NKOYU as the only "plenipotentiary representative of the peoples of Yugoslavia" and provided him with extensive military and material assistance. Britain and the United States were also forced to recognize the communist-led liberation movement as the decisive military force in Yugoslavia, but they hoped to subordinate it to the government in exile. Official military missions from the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union arrived at Tito's headquarters.

At the end of May, the Germans, wanting to secure their rear, organized a global anti-partisan operation throughout Yugoslavia. They managed to blockade the town of Drvar, which housed the Supreme Headquarters of the NOAU and the central organs of the liberation movement, and dropped a paratrooper here. On the night of June 4, on the plane of the Soviet military mission, Marshal Tito, members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPY and the main staff of the Supreme Headquarters were taken to Italy in two sorties. They then moved to the island of Vis off the coast of Dalmatia. Here, from June 14 to 17, at the suggestion of the British, who did not lose hope of uniting the forces of all Yugoslav patriots, meetings were held between Tito and the prime minister of the émigré government, Šubašić. The proposal to unite the National Liberation Committee and the royal government was rejected by Tito. As a result of the negotiations, a compromise agreement was reached on the formation of a government of people who did not compromise themselves by fighting against the liberation movement. The Soviet leadership supported this initiative.

On the basis of the agreement reached, on July 7, 1944, a new Šubašić government was formed in London, in which two ministerial chairs were occupied by representatives of the NKOYU. In the declaration on this occasion, it was said about the recognition of "the temporary administration established by AVNOYU and NKOYU." On behalf of the king and the new government, the prime minister officially recognized Marshal Tito as the leader of Yugoslavia's struggle for freedom. England officially broke with

General Mikhailovich.

On August 12, a meeting between Tito and Churchill took place in Naples. The latter persistently urged the marshal to enter into negotiations with King Peter and assist in the landing of British troops, but did not receive consent: Tito sent a letter to Stalin on July 5: "We need your greatest help."

(Later, when it turns out that Marshal Tito is building "wrong" socialism in Yugoslavia and does not heed the advice of comrades from Moscow, and the Central Committee of the CPY is a "gang of spies and murderers," a different interpretation will be given to the events: "The national liberation movement in Yugoslavia was going through during this period a severe crisis. After the German airborne assault in Drvar, the Tito command left the Yugoslav territory and took refuge with the British and Americans in Italy. The partisan units were abandoned and left to their own devices. Some of them, on their own initiative, sought to connect with the Soviet Army and moved from Bosnia and Montenegro to meet her. In the battles with the Germans in Serbia, these scattered detachments suffered heavy losses. As it turned out later, at this time, Tito and his clique, who were in Italy, betrayed the national

interests of the Yugoslav people, were preparing the occupation of Yugoslavia by Anglo-American troops.")

In early September, Tito, through the Soviet military mission, submitted to the USSR State Defense Committee a request for the entry of Red Army troops into Yugoslavia. This request was motivated by the fact that the NOAU did not have heavy weapons and tanks to defeat the German troops or prevent their withdrawal from Greece to the north. Reporting this, the head of the mission, General N.V. Korneev noted: "Marshal believes that the joint actions of the Red Army and the NOAU, in addition to a great military effect, will significantly strengthen the national liberation movement." By this time, according to Yugoslav data, the People's Liberation Army consisted of 15 corps, which included 50 divisions, two operational groups, 16 separate infantry brigades and 130 partisan detachments. They numbered about 400 thousand fighters.

In the twentieth of September, negotiations between Tito and Stalin took place in Moscow, during which an agreement was reached on the entry of large formations of the Red Army into the territory of Eastern Serbia in order to liberate the eastern regions of the country and Belgrade together with the NOAU troops.

At the end of September, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front under the command of Marshal Tolbukhin reached the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border near Vidin. To the south, on the front from Pirot to the junction of the borders of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece, the 1st, 2nd and 4th Bulgarian armies were deployed, consisting of 11 divisions and two brigades. Conditions were created for delivering a decisive blow against the enemy in Serbia and, above all, in the Belgrade direction, by the combined efforts of the Soviet and Yugoslav troops. By this time, the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia had already liberated a significant part of the country's territory. However, all the most important Yugoslav cities, the main railways and roads were still in the hands of the enemy.

On September 23, at the General Headquarters of the NOAU in Macedonia, a meeting was held between representatives of the command of the Yugoslav and Bulgarian armies, the participants of which agreed on the possibility of joint actions against the Nazis on the territory of Macedonia. Then, in Craiova, a plan of joint action was finally agreed upon, and on October 5 a Yugoslav-Bulgarian agreement was signed on the participation of Bulgarian troops in the battles against the Nazis in Yugoslavia.

The plan for the Belgrade operation was developed by the command of the 3rd Ukrainian

front and October 1 approved by the Soviet Headquarters. The idea was to use the joint efforts of the Soviet, Yugoslav and Bulgarian troops to defeat the Serbian army group, liberate the occupied regions of Serbia and the capital of Yugoslavia - Belgrade, reach the communications of Army Group E, stationed in Greece, and prevent its withdrawal from the south Balkan Peninsula. This led to the formation of a united front of the Soviet and Yugoslav troops and the creation of favorable conditions for the subsequent struggle of ZERO for the complete liberation of their country.

To achieve this goal, it was planned to deliver a combined strike by the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front and the Bulgarian troops operationally subordinate to it, part of the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front and the forces of the Yugoslav army. After overcoming the resistance of the enemy on the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border, in Western Serbia and the central part of Šumadija, Soviet and Yugoslav troops were to develop the offensive in two directions: towards Belgrade with the task of defeating the main forces of the Serbian army group, liberating the eastern regions of the country and Belgrade and in the Nis direction to repel possible attacks by the troops of Army Group E, General Lehr, withdrawing from the south of the Balkan Peninsula. At the same time, the Soviet

the Bulgarian armies advanced from east to west, and the NOAU came out to meet them from west to east. This form of maneuver required careful organization of interaction.

The 57th combined arms army (10 rifle divisions and 3 rifle brigades) and the 17th air army, the 4th guards mechanized corps, the 236th rifle division, the 5th separate motorized rifle brigade, the 96th separate tank brigade were involved in the operation. , the 1st Guards fortified area of the 3rd Ukrainian Front and the Danube military flotilla, in the combat strength of which there were 206,500 people, 2350 guns, mortars and rocket launchers, 358 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1292 aircraft and about 80 warships, mainly armored boats. They delivered the main blow in the Belgrade direction from the Radujevac, Kula, Vidin area. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front were assisted by the 10th Guards Rifle Corps of the 46th Army and part of the forces of the 5th Air Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front - 9 more divisions - 93,500 fighters and commanders. From the Yugoslav side, the 1st and 2nd army groups participated in the operation as part of the 1st Proletarian, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th corps (total

17 divisions); from the Bulgarian - the 1st, 2nd and 4th armies (9 divisions and 4 brigades).

The advancing troops had to conduct combat operations in extremely difficult terrain, during the period of the rainiest time. A mountain range stretched in the offensive zone, occupying more than 60% of the entire area of the combat area. The offensive here could only be carried out along four directions separated by 30-40 km from each other, which ran through passes, passages and gorges. The mountainous terrain, the paucity of means of communication, the low carrying capacity of bridges limited the massive use of various types of troops.

The operation was planned in two stages. From September 28 to October 10, the troops of the 57th Army were to break through the enemy's defenses, defeat him in cooperation with the 12th and 14th corps of the NOAU, seize mountain passes, break into the valley of the Morava River, cross it on the move and seize bridgeheads on western coast. From October 11 to 20, the troops of the front, in cooperation with the 1st Proletarian, 12th and 14th corps, were to dismember the Serbia group into separate parts, cut off the communications of Army Group E and immediately capture the capital of Yugoslavia. To develop operational success behind enemy lines and break through to Belgrade, a mobile front group was created. Its basis was the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps of General Zhdanov.

The German command was also preparing for the upcoming battles. In early September, two enemy army groups "E" and "F" were in the Balkans. Army Group E, under the command of Colonel General Lehr, carried out occupational service in Greece. Army Group "F" under the command of Field Marshal von Weichs was stationed on the territory of Yugoslavia and Albania. With the release of the Red Army to the eastern borders of Hungary and Yugoslavia, a threat arose to the communications of the troops operating in Greece and Albania. In the current situation, the German command was forced to take urgent measures to evacuate the occupying troops from Greece and Albania and create a powerful counterstrike force north of Belgrade, at the junction of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts.

In Yugoslavia, the Germans had 5 divisions and 4 brigades and motley collaborationist formations that did not represent a serious military force. Field Marshal Weichs was given the task of stubbornly defending the main nodes of his communications, along which the troops from Greece were retreating. Particular importance was attached to maintaining the Thessaloniki-Belgrade railway and the Belgrade region as the most important communication hub.

The task of defending Yugoslavia from the east and covering the group withdrawn from Greece

armies "E" the German command assigned to the army group "Serbia", separated from the army group "F" and which included separate units of five divisions. Its commander, General Felber, was ordered to immediately withdraw his troops to the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border and prevent the breakthrough of the Soviet armies here.

The German defense was of a focal nature. Its basis was strong strongholds created in cities, villages, at road junctions and in mountain passes.

The Soviet, Yugoslav and Bulgarian troops involved in the operation numbered 660 thousand people, 4477 guns and mortars, 421 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1250 aircraft.

They were opposed by enemy forces, which had 150 thousand soldiers and officers, 2130 guns and mortars, 125 tanks and assault guns and 352 aircraft.

In an effort to prevent the concentration of Soviet troops, the Germans on September 25 in the bend of the Danube, in the area of Turnu Severin, dealt a strong blow to the formations of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, pushed them out, went to the Danube and created a serious threat to the 75th Rifle Corps on the Transdanubian bridgehead. To help his neighbor on the right, Tolbukhin decided, without waiting for the concentration of all the forces of the 57th Army, to launch a counterattack on the enemy.

On September 28, the troops of General Hagen went on the offensive. This marked the beginning of the Belgrade operation. The army, with the support of aviation, broke through the enemy's border defensive line and, having overcome the East Serbian Mountains, reached the Morava River on October 8 and crossed it on the move, capturing two bridgeheads on the western bank. The troops of the 57th Army in the twelve days of the offensive in the mountains advanced 130 km deep into the Yugoslav territory. The Danube military flotilla supported the advancing troops and reliably provided the right flank of the army, transported troops, military equipment and various cargoes. The enemy resisted desperately, clinging to every advantageous line, settlement, road junction, blowing up bridges, mining passages and making blockages when retreating. The garrisons of the strongholds fought to the death, fighting to the last man, even when they were deep in the rear of the attackers.

At the turn of Klokočevac, Zaechar, Soviet troops established tactical cooperation with the divisions of the 14th Army Corps of the NOAU, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Yovanovitch. Together they were supposed to contribute to the offensive of nine divisions of the 1st Yugoslav Army Group of General Peko Dapčević, aimed at the liberation of the capital.

By this time, on the right, the 46th Army, without encountering serious resistance, had cleared the Yugoslav lands east of the Tisza. Its 10th Guards Rifle Corps, in cooperation with units of the NOAU, reached the Danube northeast of Belgrade on a 40-kilometer stretch, crossed the river and seized a bridgehead in the Veliko Selo area. On the left wing, the 2nd Bulgarian army of General K. Stanchev with the 13th Yugoslav corps reached the near approaches to the cities of Nis and Leskovac and covered the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front from the south, and the formations of the 1st and 4th Bulgarian armies from On October 16, they struck in the direction of the city of Shtip. Units of the NOAU operated in the same directions.

The exit of Soviet troops to the Morava River, which split the Serbia group into two parts, was unexpected for the German command. Taking advantage of this, the 57th Army successfully crossed the river on October 10 and continued the offensive. In order to increase the pace of advance on Belgrade, Marshal Tolbukhin ordered the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps, which had more than 180 tanks and self-propelled guns, to enter the battle on the morning of October 12. The directive of the front headquarters emphasized that the liberation

Belgrade should be carried out jointly with the troops of the NOAU, as agreed with Marshal Tito.

Zhdanov's mechanized corps, in close cooperation with the troops of General Hagen and the NOAU, rapidly developed the offensive. On October 12, Soviet tankers, together with soldiers of the 1st Proletarian Corps, captured the settlement of Topola, firmly intercepting the enemy's last communication leading to Belgrade from the south. Here the guards put Yugoslav fighters on their tanks and on October 14 reached the southern outskirts of the capital of Yugoslavia. There was a real threat of encirclement of the German troops operating southeast of Belgrade and striving to break through to it in order to connect with the Belgrade garrison and strengthen the defense of the city.

Without stopping the attack on Belgrade from the south, the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps struck in a southeast direction, making its way towards the right-flank formations of the 57th Army. By October 17, southeast of Belgrade, Soviet and Yugoslav troops surrounded the enemy grouping, numbering 20 thousand soldiers and officers, and on October 19 they completed its defeat.

The success in the Belgrade direction was facilitated by the active operations of the Yugoslav and Bulgarian troops in southern Serbia and Macedonia. On the Nis direction, the troops of the 2nd Bulgarian Army, the 13th Corps of the NOAU and units of the 1st Guards Fortified Region captured the city of Nish on October 14, defeating the 7th SS Mountain Division "Prince Eugene".

The final phase of the operation was the assault on Belgrade. In order to keep the capital in their hands, the enemy attracted units and subunits of several German divisions, the Serbian volunteer and Russian security corps, in total - almost 22 thousand people, 40 tanks and assault guns, about 170 guns and mortars. The German command sought to pin down large forces of Soviet and Yugoslav troops on the outskirts of the city and thereby facilitate the withdrawal of units of Army Group E from Greece to Hungary.

The Germans took care of fortifying the capital in advance. Using the favorable terrain and suburban settlements, they built a powerful defense zone around Belgrade, which consisted of external and internal defensive contours, saturated with fire weapons and engineering barriers. From the Danube to the Sava River, the city was surrounded by an anti-tank ditch, covered by heavy artillery fire and minefields. Groups of tanks and assault guns were concentrated on probable directions of attack. Reinforced concrete defensive structures with a system of circular fire were built on the streets and intersections. Almost all large buildings adapted to street fighting. Each quarter represented a strong knot of resistance.

The plan for a joint assault on Belgrade provided for a frontal attack from the south on the narrowest section of the front, its subsequent development in divergent directions, the dismemberment of the forces of the garrison and the destruction of it in parts, as well as the capture of bridges on the Sava and Danube. The 4th Guards Mechanized Corps, three rifle divisions, three artillery brigades, 16 artillery, mortar and self-propelled artillery regiments participated in the struggle for the city from the Soviet troops, and eight divisions of the 1st Proletarian and 12th Corps from the Yugoslav troops. These forces were supported by the 17th Air Army and the ships of the Danube Flotilla.

Seven motorized rifle battalions, 170 tanks and self-propelled guns, 320 guns and mortars, 24 RS installations were concentrated on the 2-kilometer breakthrough section. The enemy in this area was defended by the forces of the SS police regiment of three battalions.

The battles for Belgrade, which lasted from 14 to 20 October, were extremely stubborn.

character. In the first two days, the attackers managed to divide the enemy grouping into several parts, destroy most of his strongholds on the southern and eastern outskirts of the city. But his assault was somewhat slowed down due to the fact that part of the forces from the city had to be transferred to defeat the group, surrounded southeast of Belgrade and trying to break into the city.

To prevent destruction in the city, the Soviet command took a number of measures. In particular, the use of heavy artillery during street fighting was limited. In the liberated quarters, Soviet sappers immediately set about clearing mines and land mines.

By the end of October 20, Soviet and Yugoslav troops stormed the fortress of Kalemegdan, the last center of German resistance in Belgrade. In street fighting, the enemy lost 10,000 killed and more than 8,000 captured.

With the liberation of the capital of Yugoslavia, the operation ended.

The Belgrade operation was of great political and military importance. During it, the army group "Serbia" was defeated, a significant part of the army group "E" was defeated, the capital of Yugoslavia and most of Serbia were liberated. Army Group E, deprived of the opportunity to retreat along the Morava River valley, was forced to withdraw along difficult mountain roads, suffering heavy losses from the continuous attacks of the Yugoslav troops. The liberation of Serbia provided favorable conditions for the actions of the southern flank of the grouping of Soviet troops advancing in the direction of Budapest. NOAU got the opportunity to form a continuous front line. Favorable conditions were created for the complete liberation of the country.

Soviet losses amounted to 18,838 people killed and wounded, 53 tanks and 66 aircraft.

Until the end of October, the Red Army fought on the territory of Yugoslavia in the same grouping that had formed during the Belgrade operation. On October 30, the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, at the direction of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and in agreement with the Supreme Headquarters of the NOAU, ordered the troops of the 57th Army to be withdrawn to the northern bank of the Danube in the Petrovgrad region. At the same time, its 68th rifle corps and parts of the 1st guards fortified area were left at the line of Chachak, Kralevo, Krushevac with the task of preventing the German troops from breaking through to Belgrade. To support the NOAU forces in Yugoslavia, an air group remained under the command of General A.N. Vitruk. The National Liberation Front, the Supreme Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army and other central bodies moved to Belgrade.

On November 7, a sad Nis incident took place. During the march of the 6th Guards Corps to the Danube, a column of Soviet troops was attacked by nine American Lightning fighters. The corps commander, Lieutenant General G.P., was killed by bomb explosions. Kotov, two officers and three soldiers; burned 20 vehicles with property. The duty group of Soviet fighters, covering the column, entered the battle, shot down two American planes, losing three of their own. The matter has reached the highest levels. During the proceedings, the head of the US military mission admitted that the commander of the American squadron made a navigational error, and expressed a desire to more closely coordinate aviation operations in the areas of contact of the allied forces, especially with the prospect of invading Germany. Stalin accepted the explanation and apology. During the years of the Cold War, this case was interpreted unambiguously: it was a provocation, "a treacherous blow from around the corner."

On November 27, the 68th Rifle Corps, together with units of the 14th Yugoslav Corps, captured the city of Kraljevo, an important road junction. Thus, the threat to the capital was finally removed, and in early December Tolbukhin was able to transfer the 68th corps to the interfluvium of the Danube and Sava, where he, in cooperation with the 1st Yugoslav corps, led

fighting for Osijek until December 25, and then was withdrawn from Yugoslavia.

In the first days of March 1945, a regency council was formed, which accepted the resignation of the Šubašić government. At the same time, the Anti-Fascist Council accepted the resignation of the National Liberation Committee. On March 7, Tito formed a single government, which included, in addition to Šubašić as foreign minister, three more representatives of emigration. The main core was made up of members of the NKOYU. The idyll did not last long.

On November 29, the Constituent Assembly opened in Belgrade, proclaiming Yugoslavia a Federal People's Republic and depriving Peter of monarchical rights. Tito became chairman of the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia and the country's president, in 1974 these posts were assigned to him for life. At first, the Yugoslav communists received the widest support and material assistance from the USSR, but not all of Stalin's recipes were to their liking, and the paths of the two communist parties diverged for a long time. Each of them built its own communism, however, in the end they came to the same result: both states "with the most advanced social system" disappeared from the map of the world.

DEBRECENS OPERATION

Hitler's last ally in Europe was Hungary, which, to be sure, was friendly occupied by divisions of the Wehrmacht. In late September, Horthy made several attempts to negotiate a separate peace with the Western powers. In particular,

On September 22, he sent by plane to the headquarters of the Anglo-American command, Colonel-General Istvan Nadai, located near Naples, instructing him to persuade the British to land in Rijeka, and from there to break through Zagreb into the southern part of Hungary. In conditions when the Red Army was already fighting directly on the borders of Hungary, the plan looked utopian. The Allies advised the emissary to "turn to the Russians". The regent was forced to formally apply to the Soviet government for clarification of the terms of the armistice. On October 1, a Hungarian delegation arrived in Moscow.

By the beginning of October 1944, on the border with Hungary and Yugoslavia, in a section of 800 km from the Prislop Pass to the great bend of the Danube, there were troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. To the right, east of the Dukla Pass to the border with Romania, the 4th Ukrainian Front was fighting. On the left, troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front were operating on Yugoslav territory. The exit of the armies of Marshal Malinovsky to the borders of Hungary created favorable conditions for the actions of the 4th Ukrainian Front, jeopardizing the entire German-Hungarian grouping in the Carpathians with a powerful flank attack.

Initially, after the advance of the Red Army into the western regions of Romania and Bulgaria, the German command assumed that Stalin was aiming not at Budapest, but at the Black Sea straits. At a meeting on September 10-13, Hitler told General Frisner that "the political goal of the Russians is not Germany, but the Bosphorus, which in general is the issue around which everything revolves. Now Russia will first of all raise the question of the Balkans and the Bosphorus ... "According to the Fuhrer, such a development of events should have led to a decisive clash between the allies, and the task of the Wehrmacht for this period was to" ... sit out the time. In addition, it is necessary to take all measures so that the fronts in the Balkans are held. But very soon it became clear that the Soviet command was not going to transfer the main forces to the Bosphorus direction, but was concentrating them against the most important centers of Hungary.

This forced the German command to significantly strengthen Army Group South. The most important political, military and economic importance of Hungary predetermined Hitler's firm decision to turn the territory of the country into a strategic base for Germany.

In order to prevent the entry of Soviet troops into Hungary, it was planned to launch a series of counterattacks. In the OKH directive of September 30, Army Group South was tasked with holding the Carpathian salient and preparing an offensive operation, during which, from the Debrecen area, strike at the Soviet troops that had reached the border in the area between the cities of Oradea and Mako, and "reach such a frontier that could be held during the winter by insignificant forces. The enemy sought to defeat the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, and then, having regrouped his troops, strike from the Turda area on his right wing, push back the Soviet troops beyond the Southern Carpathians and block their access to the northern part of Transylvania and the Middle Danube lowland. At the same time, the German command continued to withdraw from the southern regions of Yugoslavia, from Albania and Greece, troops that were under the threat of attacks from Tolbukhin's armies.

The Soviet command, in turn, planned the development of the offensive in the Belgrade direction, in the central part of Hungary and in the southeastern part of Slovakia. The main role was now assigned to the 2nd Ukrainian Front. In early September, Marshal Malinovsky received the task of striking under the base of the Carpathian ledge in the direction of Oradea, Debrecen, Nyiregyhaza - important bridges of railways and highways in order to open the way to the north and northwest and create favorable conditions for the troops of General Petrov in overcoming the Carpathians. However, during the offensive, his formations faced stubborn opposition.

enemy and moved very slowly. Therefore, on September 15, the Headquarters ordered the front to develop a strike in the direction of Cluj, Debrecen, so that no later than October 7-10, the main forces would reach the Tisza River in the Chop-Szeged sector. The Romanian troops were supposed to cover the Szeged, Giurgiu section along the Danube River and part of the forces to conduct offensive operations together with the Soviet troops.

Throughout the second half of September, Malinovsky's armies made attempts to continue the offensive and repulsed strong enemy counterattacks in the areas of Turda and Turnu Severin. But they could not achieve significant success, and on October 3, the Headquarters again clarified the tasks. She ordered the forces of the 6th Guards Tank Army and Pliev's mechanized cavalry group to strike in a northerly direction, bypassing Debrecen from the west, and the Romanian troops, previously under the operational subordination of the 46th Army, to go on the offensive on the left flank of the 53rd army in the direction of Timisoara, Szeged. It was decided to group the main forces of the 46th Army on its right flank, and to aim one corps at the Belgrade direction, deploying it along the northern bank of the Danube.

Having received these instructions, Malinovsky, without an operational pause, began preparing the Debrecen operation. Before it began, the Stavka sent the 4th and 6th Guards Cavalry Corps from its reserve to the 2nd Ukrainian Front. From the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the 46th Army, the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps and the 7th breakthrough artillery division were transferred to him. In September, the front received about 75,000 reinforcements. The 4th Guards Army of the Stavka reserve was concentrated in the Timisoara area. In total, by the beginning of October, the 2nd Ukrainian Front included the 7th Guards, 40th, 27th, 53rd, 46th combined arms, 6th

guards tank and 5th air armies, 18th tank corps, horse mechanized groups of generals Pliev and Gorshkov, as well as the Romanian volunteer division named after Tudor Vladimirescu. The front consisted of 40 divisions, two fortified areas, three armored, two mechanized and three

cavalry corps, one tank brigade - 698 thousand soldiers and officers, 10,200 guns and mortars, 825 tanks and self-propelled guns, 1,100 aircraft. In addition, the 1st and 4th Romanian armies were operationally subordinate to the front commander - 22 understaffed and poorly equipped divisions, in which there were about 70 thousand fighters.

They were opposed by the troops of the German Army Group "South" under the command of Colonel General Frisner as part of the 8th and 6th German, 2nd and 3rd Hungarian armies and a number of battle groups - a total of 29 divisions and 6 brigades and 3 divisions of the group armies "F". They had 3500 guns and mortars, 300 tanks and about 500 aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet.

Fulfilling the instructions of the Headquarters, Malinovsky decided to deliver the main blow to the enemy from the area south of Oradea in the direction of Debrecen. On the right flank, it was planned to deliver auxiliary strikes in order to capture the Cluj, Satu Mare area. On the left wing, it was planned to defeat the enemy on the eastern bank of the Tisza River and reliably cover the left flank of the front's main grouping.

In accordance with the plan of the operation, Malinovsky ordered the 6th Guards Tank Army of General A.G. Kravchenko and Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group to attack in the first echelon with the task of independently breaking through the enemy's tactical defense zone. Such an unusual task was explained primarily by the fact that on this sector of the front the German troops had a relatively weak focal defense, the basis of which was individual strongholds.

On the morning of October 6, after a short artillery and aviation preparation, the strike force of the 2nd Ukrainian Front went on the offensive. On the very first day, the 53rd Army and Pliev's group broke through the enemy's defenses and defeated the opposing forces of the 3rd Hungarian Army. By the end of the third day, they advanced up to 100 km to the north and reached the Kartsaga area. The troops of the right wing and the center, having met stubborn resistance in the Cluj region, advanced slowly. On the left wing, by the end of October 8, the 46th Army completely liberated Yugoslav territory east of the Tisza River and captured bridgeheads on its western bank.

However, on the most important sector of the front, the tank army of Kravchenko, thrown into battle without preparing a breakthrough, which met with very strong resistance and suffered heavy losses, got stuck on the outskirts of the city of Oradea and had no success. As it turned out, it was here that the enemy was concentrating forces for the strike planned for October 12.

On the right wing of the front, the 40th, 7th Guards, 4th Romanian and 27th armies
trampled in place.

The headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered Malinovsky to capture the Oradea region as quickly as possible. To do this, she considered it necessary to strike at the city with the forces of the 6th Guards Tank Army from the west, the 33rd Rifle Corps from the south, and the Pliev group from the northwest. To strengthen the center of the front, the Headquarters ordered the 7th Guards Army to be brought to the Beyush area no later than October 20. Gorshkov's cavalry-mechanized group also advanced here. The attack on Oradea was supported by most of the front-line aviation.

German-Hungarian troops in the Oradea region and on the outskirts of Debrecen offered stubborn resistance. In front of the right wing of the front, on October 9-10, they were forced to begin a withdrawal in a northwestern direction. On October 12, Pliev's group, in cooperation with the 33rd Rifle Corps, captured the city of Oradea. The tank army acted unsuccessfully, for a whole week it could not move and lost a significant amount of equipment. Malinovsky pointed out to General Kravchenko: "Your losses and failure to complete the assigned task stem from your desire to conduct only frontal attacks and unwillingness to invest tactical

maneuver, which you have repeatedly pointed out. But on the whole, the day, scheduled by the enemy to defeat the Soviet troops that had reached the Hungarian border, ended in the defeat of his strike force. True, in ten days of fighting, the front lost 458 tanks and self-propelled guns, of which 202 vehicles belonged to the associations of Kravchenko and Pliev.

As Frisner testifies, in Budapest reigned "in connection with the breakthrough of the Russians beyond the Tisza ... an extremely dejected mood." On October 11, the Hungarian delegation in Moscow signed the preliminary terms of the armistice agreement: within ten days, evacuate their troops from the occupied territories of neighboring states under the supervision of the allied control commission, immediately break with Germany and declare war on her, the Soviet government provides assistance to Hungary with its troops. The regent asked the Soviet command to suspend the offensive for three days, citing the need to prepare for the implementation of the terms of the truce. The request was fulfilled.

On October 15, Horthy's message was broadcast over the radio in Budapest that "the German Empire had lost the war, that it had "already violated its allied loyalty" and that the Germans were "plundering and destroying" in the country's territory. In conclusion, the regent stated: "... I informed the representative of the German Empire in Hungary about the conclusion of a preliminary armistice agreement with our opponents and the cessation of all military actions against them on our part."

On the same day, he issued an order in which he informed the Hungarian army of his decision to ask for a truce, but did not say a word that the conditions had already been accepted, and did not give a direct order to open the front.

Immediately after the transmission of the statement, the Germans, diligently informed by the regent himself, carried out a pre-planned action "Panzerfaust" to change the government. There were practically no Hungarian units in the capital, but Otto Skorzeny and three German divisions were active, which occupied the most important areas and institutions. On October 16, Horthy declared his appeal over the radio "invalid", signed an act of renunciation of the title of regent, transferring power to the staunch Fascist Ferenc Salashi, who declared himself head of state, leader of the nation and formed a government of "concentration of right forces." First of all, Salashi sent a telegram of thanks to Hitler, promising to "put the Hungarian army to the last man" in the service of Germany. The entire population of the country between the ages of 12 and 70 was declared conscripted into the army or forced labor.

Salashi's coming to power meant for everyone that Hungary would continue the war.

Malinovsky, meanwhile, continued the offensive. On October 20, the 6th Guards Tank Army, together with the cavalry-mechanized groups of Generals Pliev and Gorshkov, captured Debrecen, an important enemy defense center, with a blow in converging directions.

The armies of the right wing occupied the Cluj area. By the end of October 20, they reached the Sziget-Margita line and established direct contact with the troops of the front operating in the Debrecen direction.

On October 22, Pliev's cavalry-mechanized group, which included the group of General Gorshkov, captured the city of Nyiregyhaza, advanced forward units to the north up to 30 km and reached the Tisza River, creating a threat of encirclement of the Wöhler army group. This predetermined the fierce nature of the fighting, which lasted from 23 to 28 October. To avoid encirclement, the enemy, with the help of three army and one tank corps, delivered a powerful counterattack on the flanks of the KMG and cut its communications south of Nyiregyhaza. On October 27, Pliev's group left the city and joined up with the main forces of the front.

On the Solnok direction, the 53rd and 7th Guards armies by the end of October 28 captured the eastern bank of the Tisza. The 40th and 4th Romanian armies, operating on the right wing, by this time had completed the liberation of the northern part of Transylvania and crossed the Romanian-Hungarian border. On the left wing of the front, the troops of the 46th Army on October 21 captured the cities of Baia and Sombor, and by the end of October 28 they captured a large operational bridgehead in the interfluvium of the Tisza and the Danube.

Thus, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, having overcome fierce resistance, approached the Tisza on the right wing, reached the eastern bank of the river in the central sector, and crossed it on the left wing. On October 28, the Debrecen operation ended by overcoming the Tisza. During this first major operation on Hungarian territory, the Red Army, in cooperation with the Romanian troops, occupied the northern part of Transylvania and a significant part of Hungary - one third of its territory, where a quarter of the country's population lived.

Soviet troops during the offensive captured more than 42 thousand soldiers and officers. The loss of the front amounted to 84 thousand killed and wounded.

The exit of the formations of the 2nd Ukrainian Front to the Debrecen area created a serious threat to the rear of the Carpathian group. This forced the German command to begin the withdrawal of its troops in front of the central sector and the left wing of the 4th Ukrainian

front. The commander of the 1st Hungarian Army, General Bela Miklos, seeing the futility of further struggle and being dissatisfied with the policy of the government, went over to the Soviet side with part of the army headquarters on October 16. The units of the army left on their own "self-determined" depending on the political views of the commanders and the mood of the soldiers. Over 10,000 people crossed over to the Soviet side in large groups; taking into account the losses in killed, wounded, prisoners and deserters, the 1st Hungarian army actually disintegrated.

In connection with the entry of the Red Army into Hungarian territory, on the instructions of the State Defense Committee of October 27, 1944, the Military Council of the front turned to the Hungarian people with a now traditional appeal, urging them to assist the Soviet troops in every possible way in their liberation mission. The appeal emphasized that the Red Army was entering Hungary not with the aim of acquiring any part of its territory, but only out of necessity, "not as a conqueror, but as a liberator of the Hungarian people from the German fascist yoke." This document explained that the Hungarian authorities, the system of economic and political structure and existing customs would be preserved on the territory of the country, that all rights and property of citizens would be taken under the protection of the Soviet military authorities.

The emigrant communists from the Foreign leadership who followed the troops organized a legal Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the city of Szeged. Here, in early December, the Hungarian National Front was formed from representatives of democratic parties, and on December 22, the Provisional National Government was formed in Debrecen, headed by the former commander of the 1st Hungarian Army, Miklós, which, two days later, asked Moscow for terms of a truce and on behalf of the Hungarian people expressed its readiness to declare war on Germany and take part "in the struggle to destroy Hitlerism and thereby atone for the guilt committed by previous governments against the Soviet Union and other freedom-loving peoples." On December 28, 1944, the Provisional Government declared null and void the treaties concluded with Germany and declared war on it.

MEDAL FOR THE CITY OF BUDAPEST

After the completion of the Debrecen operation, Stalin ordered the Budapest operation to begin without a pause, no matter how much Malinovsky asked him to wait.

At the same time, the special significance of the capital was taken into account: more than 50 percent of all industrial enterprises in Hungary were concentrated in this city.

The immediate attack on Budapest was also dictated by favorable operational strategic conditions. The main forces of the Army Group "South", numbering 18 German and 20 Hungarian divisions, operated in the Nyiregyhaz-Miskolc direction. The German command decided to use them to cover the northeastern approaches to Budapest, while the southeastern ones were defended by the troops of the 3rd Hungarian Army, which was battered in battles, reinforced by one tank and one motorized German divisions. Here, the operational density of enemy troops was 2 times lower.

Given these circumstances, the Headquarters ordered the 2nd Ukrainian Front to go on the offensive, capture the capital of Hungary and withdraw the country from the war. The main forces of the front were located in its central sector and the right wing, but no time was allotted for regrouping the forces. Stalin demanded an immediate, poorly secured frontal strike, hoping to exploit the confusion in the Hungarian ruling circles immediately after the putsch. Malinovsky was to strike this blow on his left wing with the forces of the 46th Army of General Shlemín and the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, which arrived from the deep rear and had

206 tanks and 96 self-propelled guns, with the support of the 5th Air Army in the general direction of Kecskemét, Budapest with the task of breaking through the defenses southeast of Budapest and capturing IM.

An auxiliary strike was delivered by the 7th Guards Army from the area northeast of the city of Szolnok in order to force the Tisza and seize a bridgehead on its western bank. The rest of the troops continued their offensive in the direction of Miskolc, pinning down the opposing enemy forces and preventing their transfer to the Budapest area. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front were ordered to continue regrouping and concentrating the main forces in the Yugoslav Banat, while at the same time seizing bridgeheads on the right bank of the Danube in Hungary with advanced units. The 4th Ukrainian Front advanced deep into Czechoslovakia, contributing to the successful development of the Budapest operation.

Thus, for the operation allocated 39 rifle, 9 cavalry, 4 airborne divisions, 4 mechanized and 3 tank corps, 1 tank, 1 self-propelled artillery brigade, 2 fortified areas, 1 marine brigade - 720,000 people.

In an effort to prevent the further advance of Soviet troops deep into Hungary, the enemy, on the outskirts of Budapest, created a number of heavily fortified defensive lines and city bypasses, which rested their flanks on the Danube north and south of the city. To the south-west of the capital - along the line of lakes Balaton and Velence, to the bend of the Danube near the city of Vac and further along the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border - a defensive strip "Margarita Line" was prepared. The enemy did not have large forces in the Budapest area.

In the zone of the upcoming breakthrough of the 46th Army (6 rifle divisions), units of the 8th, 10th Infantry and 1st Cavalry Hungarian divisions were defending. The reserve was the 24th Panzer Division of the Germans.

The offensive of the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front began on October 29 and at first developed successfully: Shlemin's divisions broke through the defenses of the 3rd Hungarian Army and, after bringing into battle about 400 tanks of the 2nd, and then to the left of the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps, began rapid advance. For the enemy, this blow was unexpected; On November 2, Soviet troops were 15 km from Budapest. However, it was not possible to break into the city on the move. Just on this day, the enemy completed the regrouping of forces. German command in

hurriedly transferred here from the Miskolc area three tank and one motorized divisions, which, having occupied the first line of defense of the capital, offered stubborn organized resistance to the tankers. Protracted battles began. When the combined arms units caught up with the mechanized corps, it was already too late to try to capture the city from the south: the enemy managed to organize a strong defense. With the current configuration of the front line, attempts to advance on a narrow front became dangerous: the right flank of the strike force turned out to be unsecured, since the 7th Guards Army did not fulfill its task.

On November 4, the Headquarters pointed out to Malinovsky that "an attack on Budapest in a narrow sector by forces of only two mechanized corps with a small amount of infantry could lead to unjustified losses and put the troops operating in this direction under a flank attack from the northeast." Therefore, the front was proposed to speed up the withdrawal of the troops of the center and the right wing to the western bank of the Tisza in order to expand the offensive zone and defeat the enemy's Budapest grouping with strikes from the north and northeast in cooperation with the troops of the left wing.

Both sides correctly calculated the situation. On November 5, the tank group of General Kirchner hit the right flank of Shlemin's army, advanced 20 km and cut the Kecskemét-Budapest road. It took two days to restore the situation. By the end of November 6, the troops of the 40th and 27th armies, having liquidated the enemy bridgehead on the left bank, reached the Tisza in the entire strip; The 7th Guards right flank advanced north to 45 km and was with all its forces behind Tisza; The 46th Army was trampling around the outer contour of Budapest.

1] November, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front again went on the offensive, which lasted 16 days. During this time, they, pushing the enemy in the interfluvium of the Tisza and the Danube, advanced in a north-western direction up to 65 km and approached the outer contour of the defense of Budapest. However, it was not possible to cut and defeat the Budapest grouping east of the city. The task as a whole turned out to be unfulfilled, although in the strip of the 7th Guards Army Malinovsky threw 481 tanks and a self-propelled gun into battle. On the one hand, the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the autumn thaw, the untimely delivery of ammunition due to greatly stretched communications, as well as the fatigue of the troops, who had been continuously advancing for more than three months, prevented. On the other hand, the wasteful attitude towards people throughout the war, although it was compensated by regular reinforcements, but in the course of long-term operations inevitably led to a decrease in the quality of the troops. Having an invariably variable composition of 700-750 thousand people, the 2nd Ukrainian Front lost about 200 thousand officers and soldiers in three months killed and wounded.

The directive of the front commander indicated that the commanders of mobile formations did not seek to break forward in a compact mass, but acted in one line with the infantry, getting involved in protracted battles; tanks were used dispersed, in small groups; commanders poorly organized fire control; the headquarters did not sufficiently control the actions of the troops; often the commanders of formations, having a three or fourfold superiority, suspended the offensive in order to repel counterattacks by small groups of the enemy, that is, they did exactly what the enemy wanted.

The situation that had developed by November 25 forced Malinovsky to ask the Headquarters for permission to stop the active operations of the three left-flank armies of the front in order to prepare them for a further offensive from December 4-5.

The new plan was to capture Budapest by bypassing it from the north by the 7th Guards, 6th Guards Tank Armies and the Pliev Group, and from the southwest by the main forces of the 46th Army and the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, while providing the shock group on the right with an offensive 53rd Army of General G.F. Tarasova in

north direction. In the strip of the army of General Shumilov, a density of 260 artillery barrels per | km and 510 armored vehicles are concentrated. In addition, Tarasov's army was given 160 tanks and self-propelled guns.

The actions of the southern strike group were less secure. At the same time, she had to first force such a serious water barrier as the Danube before the eyes of the enemy. Meanwhile, 80 km south of Shlemin's army, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front were already on the western bank of the Danube. A blow from here to the north could bring the Soviet troops west of Budapest much faster and with fewer casualties. However, the idea of involving Tolbukhin's armies in the operation came "after".

The German command, given the threat looming in connection with the capture by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front of the largest bridgehead across the Danube, as well as the need to establish the unity of all formations on the territory of Hungary, transferred from the group

armies "F" to Army Group "South" 2nd Panzer Army. During November, the enemy systematically reinforced his grouping in the direction of Budapest. In addition, Malinovsky's intentions did not remain a secret to General Frisner: he additionally deployed three tank divisions, one assault gun brigade and the 503rd heavy tank battalion to the sector of the 3rd Hungarian army.

In total, the 2nd Ukrainian Front had 528 thousand people, 9014 guns and mortars, 565 tanks and self-propelled guns, 950 aircraft. The Germans could oppose them with 127 thousand soldiers and officers, 1830 guns and mortars, 411 tanks and assault guns, 450 aircraft.

On December 5, the Soviet offensive resumed. For five days, the troops of the left wing and the center of the front unsuccessfully tried to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping by outflanking it from the north and southwest. The main grouping with a tank ram managed to break through to the big bend of the Danube north of Budapest, pushing the main forces of the 6th Army to the area north of the Ipel River, but the second half of the "pincers" - the 46th Army and the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps of General K.V. Sviridova - did not fulfill her task. Already during the night crossing of the Danube, Shlemin's divisions suffered heavy losses in personnel from enemy artillery fire. Almost all engineering facilities were destroyed, as a result, the crossing of the mechanized corps took three days. The army managed to capture a small bridgehead, but due to lack of forces, it could not reach Budapest from the south-west, stumbling on the "Margarita Line".

Thus, the third attempt to capture Budapest by the forces of one front was not successful. At the same time, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front completed the liberation of the interfluvium of the Tisza and the Danube and cut off the escape route to the north for the Budapest grouping.

By December 9, the 57th Army of the 3rd Ukrainian Front reached the area south of Lake Balaton. From the second half of November, on the right bank of the Danube, the 4th Guards Army, which arrived at the front, began hostilities, the troops of which joined with the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. There was a real possibility of a strike by Soviet troops in the rear of the enemy's Budapest grouping.

According to the directive of the Headquarters of December 12, the encirclement and defeat of the Budapest grouping was now planned to be carried out by the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. The 46th Army, which operated on the western bank of the Danube, was placed at the disposal of Tolbukhin.

By the beginning of the December offensive, the 2nd Ukrainian Front (4th Romanian, 40th and 27th armies) had 39 rifle divisions, 2 tank, 2 mechanized and 2 cavalry corps, 2 fortified areas and 14 Romanian divisions. Troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front (46th, 4th Guards and 57th Armies) had 31 rifle

division, 1 brigade of marines, 1 fortified area, 1 tank, 2 mechanized and 1 cavalry corps. The 1st Bulgarian Army operated as part of the front. The ground forces were supported by the aviation of the 5th and 17th air armies and the ships of the Danube military flotilla. South of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the 3rd Yugoslav Army operated.

Thus, the border of the fronts was established along the Danube, the elimination of the enemy in Pest was to be carried out by the troops of Malinovsky, and in Buda - by the armies of Tolbukhin.

The forces of the two Soviet fronts were opposed by the German troops of Army Group "South" and part of the forces of Army Group "F" - a total of 51 German and Hungarian divisions and 2 brigades, including 9 tank and 4 motorized divisions, 1 motorized and 1 cavalry brigade and significant aviation forces of the 4th air fleet.

Marshal Malinovsky received the task of attacking the left wing strike group to strike from the Steps area in the general direction to Soldiny, go to the Danube in the Nesmey, Esztergom sector and prevent the withdrawal of the Budapest grouping to the northwest. At the same time, the front was part of the forces to advance on Budapest from the east. Marshal Tolbukhin was tasked to strike from the area of Lake Velence to the north, go to the banks of the Danube in the Esztergom, Nesmey area and connect with the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, thereby cutting off the escape routes of the Budapest grouping to the west. From the Bichke region, part of the forces of the front was to advance on Budapest and take it in cooperation with the troops of Malinovsky. The creation of an external front 50-60 km west and south-west of Budapest was also entrusted to the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

The offensive, which began on December 20, developed successfully. The formations of the 2nd Ukrainian Front by the end of the day advanced north-west of Budapest by 15-32 km. The German-Hungarian troops suffered heavy losses, but, having brought up fresh forces, they sought to stop the further advance of the Soviet troops. On December 21, with three tank divisions, supported by infantry, they launched counterattacks from the south and north to Shagi. They managed to push the right-flank formations of the 7th Guards Army and by the end of December 22, go to the rear of Kravchenko's tank army. Having assessed the situation, Marshal Malinovsky ordered the 6th Guards Tank Army, while holding the Levice area, to turn the main forces to the south, strike along the eastern bank of the Gron River and, in cooperation with the 7th Guards Army, encircle and destroy the entire enemy grouping in the interfluvium of Ipel and Gron. Tankers, with the active support of aviation, successfully completed this task. On December 26, tank brigades broke through to the Danube north of Esztergom and joined forces with Tolbukhin's troops. At the end of December, the 7th Guards Army reached the Gron River and, south of Soldina, captured a small bridgehead on the opposite bank. By the end of December, the troops of the left wing approached Budapest from the east. On the right wing, Trofimenko's 27th Army and Managarov's 53rd Army eliminated a ledge in the area of the Matra Mountains.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front broke through the main line of defense and advanced 5-7 km on the first day of the offensive. The enemy made strong counterattacks. On the second day they became even more furious, the fighting in the Szekesfehervar area was especially stubborn. In order to break the resistance of the enemy, the front commander ordered the second echelons of the corps to enter the battle, and on December 21, army mobile groups: the 2nd Guards and 7th Mechanized Corps, as well as the 18th Tank Corps, which constituted the front mobile group. However, it was not possible to break through the enemy defenses to the full depth on time. Rifle divisions did not have tanks for direct infantry support, and in most cases, second echelons.

Only on the fourth day, the troops of the front were able to gnaw through all three defensive lines. Having advanced 27 km from the beginning of the offensive, as a result of a fierce battle, they captured the city of Szekesfehervar and rushed to

north. On December 24, they drove the enemy out of the city of Bichke, and two days later, having reached the Danube, they occupied Esztergom and joined forces with Malinovsky.

As a result, an enemy grouping consisting of 7 infantry, 2 tank, 1 motorized, 2 cavalry divisions, 3 artillery brigades, up to 30 separate battalions, regiments and combat troupes of Germans and Hungarians with a total number of 188 thousand people was surrounded. At the same time, the 46th Army, in cooperation with the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, broke into Buda and started street fighting. Formations of the 4th Guards Army of General Zakharov and the 5th Guards Cavalry Corps on December 26 advanced to the line southwest of Szekesfehervar, creating an outer front of the encirclement.

On December 29, Marshals Malinovsky and Tolbukhin, in order to avoid further bloodshed, to protect Budapest from destruction, to preserve its historical monuments, turned to the command of the encircled group with an ultimatum. The terms of surrender were continuously transmitted by powerful sound broadcasting stations, and two truce envoys were sent to the enemy headquarters - captains Miklos Steinmetz and I.A. Ostapenko. The besieged refused to engage in any negotiations; parliamentarians were killed.

The refusal of the Nazis to surrender forced the Soviet troops to begin military operations to destroy the encircled group. Fierce battles broke out with renewed vigor. They fought continuously day and night for almost a month and a half. The reason for the protracted struggle was the events unfolding on the outer front of the encirclement.

Dissatisfied with the actions of Generals Frisner and Freter-Picot, on December 23, Hitler appointed General Wöhler as commander of Army Group South, and General Balck as commander of the 6th Army, which fought in the Budapest area. On December 25, the command of the German 6th Army was informed of the Führer's decision to send significant reinforcements to the area west of Budapest. Army Group "South" was constantly reinforced by tank formations. If by the beginning of the Debrecen operation, the troops of the two Ukrainian fronts were opposed by 4 tank and 3 motorized divisions, then by January 1, 1945 - 13 tank, two motorized divisions and one motorized brigade. Despite the fact that the German command was aware of the preparation of the Red Army for a major offensive against the East Prussian and Warsaw groups, it continued to strengthen Army Group South, even at the expense of weakening its forces in the center of the Soviet German front. Thus, the 4th SS Panzer Corps under the command of Gruppenführer Herbert Gille was transferred from Warsaw as part of the Totenkopf and Viking Panzer Divisions.

According to Guderian: "The liberation from the blockade of Budapest was more important to Hitler than the defense of East Germany." This can be believed, given that the Wehrmacht had 24 tank and 7 motorized divisions on the entire Eastern Front.

To release the Budapest "garrison", the German command concentrated an SS tank corps and other formations - 5 tank and 3 infantry divisions - southeast of Komarno.

On the Soviet side, on the 120-kilometer stretch between the Danube and Lake Balaton, the outer front of the encirclement was held by the 4th Guards Army of General Zakharov, consisting of 13 rifle divisions, the 1st Guards Fortified Region and the 7th Mechanized Corps. The front reserve was located in the army zone - the 5th Guards Cavalry and 18th Tank Corps.

On the way was the 1st Guards Order, who spent more than a year in the reserve of the Headquarters

Lenin, a mechanized corps under the command of General I.N. Russiyanov, fully equipped with selected personnel - veterans and Siberians and equipment, and reinforced with three self-propelled artillery regiments with the latest SU-100. The basis of the tank fleet was the American Shermans.

Reconnaissance of the army and the front did not reveal the intention of the enemy to strike at the right flank of the army. The main forces of the army were on the left flank, where in January offensive attempts were made.

On the night of January 2, the Germans, after a short but powerful artillery preparation, went on the offensive in the direction of Bichka, bringing 300 tanks into battle. The defense of the 80th Guards Rifle Division, which did not even have time to dig trenches, was broken through immediately. By the end of January 3, the enemy had advanced to a depth of 16-24 km. In the next three days - for another 12-13 km and by the end of September 6 was near Bichke. Only thanks to the stubbornness of the Soviet soldiers, who got rid of the syndrome of tank fear and encirclement, and the maneuver of the reserves, it was possible to stop him. The main forces of the 18th Tank and 1st Guards Mechanized Corps, 4 Rifles and 1 cavalry division, 17 artillery, mortar, fighter and self-propelled regiments, engineer

parts.

At the same time, the Headquarters ordered the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front to strike the 7th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies from the area north of Esztergom along the northern bank of the Danube on Komarno, seize the crossings near this city, force the river, go to the rear of the enemy grouping and defeat it in cooperation with the strike force of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, operating from Bichke to Komarno.

On January 6, the armies of Shumilov and Kravchenko, with the support of the 5th Air Army, broke through the German defenses on the Hron River, advanced 25-35 km by the end of the next day and started fighting for Nowe Zamky and Komarno. In the following days, Soviet troops met with increasing enemy counterattacks, which simultaneously brought in up to 100 tanks and assault guns. On January 11-13, the enemy stepped up counterattacks by bringing in a fresh 20th Panzer Division. Fierce fighting in the interfluvium of the Hron and Nitra ended in pushing the Soviet troops back 15-16 km. On January 14, both sides went on the defensive. Tolbukhin's troops continued to repel German attacks and could not organize a strike on Komarno.

The task set by the Headquarters turned out to be unfulfilled. The main reason was the lack of strength.

The enemy did not give up the idea to go to the Bicke area and from there to attack Budapest. Leaving almost unchanged the composition of the strike group in the direction of the first strike, he concentrated a new group of three tank and one cavalry divisions in the area of the salient south of Mohr. From here, an attack was planned in the direction of Zama, Bichke to connect with the main forces of the group advancing from the northwest. The second blow of the enemy, inflicted on January 8, did not come as a surprise, its direction was accurately determined by reconnaissance, and the 70th Rifle and 7th Mechanized Corps, which were defending here, met the onslaught with dignity. In five days, the Germans advanced 6-7 km and ran out of steam.

In the second half of January, the German command made another attempt to unblock the Budapest grouping. The idea now was to break through between the lakes Velence and Balaton, reach the Danube north of Dunaföldvár and cut the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front in two. Subsequently, covering from the south, develop a strike along the Danube bank to Budapest, connect with the garrison and destroy the 46th and 4th Guards armies.

The regrouping of the 4th SS Panzer Corps to the area east of Veszprem remained unnoticed by the Soviet command. Operation leaders

organized a complex series of military transports. Instead of simply transferring the divisions of the "black general" from near Komarno to Balaton, they were loaded into trains and transported in a roundabout way through Czechoslovakia, Germany and Austria along a route of one and a half thousand kilometers. Along the way, misinformation spread. According to a survey of prisoners and defectors, front-line intelligence

came to the conclusion that the enemy was preparing to begin a general withdrawal of troops to the west. The divisional commanders were instructed to be ready for active pursuit in order to prevent the Germans from breaking away.

It was planned to start the "persecution" on the evening of January 17th. It was at this time that 560 tanks struck in the sector of the 135th Rifle Corps. On the first day, German tank units advanced to a depth of 16-30 km and were briefly detained only at the turn of the Sharviz Canal. Parts of the Soviet 7th mechanized corps were surrounded. The 18th tank and two rifle corps were urgently transferred to the breakthrough area. On the morning of January 19, the Germans crossed the canal and, developing an offensive in divergent directions, by the morning of January 20 they reached the Danube, in the Dunapentele region. The 18th tank and 133rd rifle corps, which were supposed to stop the enemy on the canal, were cut off from their troops. In two days, the enemy achieved significant operational success. Having advanced 55 km, he split the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front into two parts.

On January 22, the Headquarters ordered Tolbukhin to continue a tough defense in the direction of Komarno and at the same time to concentrate the 23rd tank and one rifle corps southwest of Budapest in order to launch a counterattack between Lake Velence and the Danube in the direction of Saroszda. Tolbukhin was supposed to launch a counterattack between the Danube and the Sharviz Canal. At the same time, it was pointed out that it was necessary to strengthen the defense along the eastern bank of the Danube and prevent it from being forced by the enemy.

The measures taken have somewhat improved the situation. From January 20 to 26, stubborn fighting continued in the Szekesfehervar area, east and northeast of Lake Velence. On January 22, the 21st Guards Rifle Corps was forced to leave Szekesfehervar and retreat 7-8 km to the northeast. Decisive events unfolded between Lake Velence and the Danube. On January 22, the enemy resumed the offensive, delivering a massive blow in a narrow area, broke through the Soviet defenses and by the end of January 24 reached Baracka, finding himself 30 km from the group surrounded in Buda. In the next two days, he advanced another 10 km in a northwesterly direction and finally ran out of steam.

On January 27, having concentrated two shock groups and bringing into battle a new, 26th army, led by General Hagen, Tolbukhin struck at the flanks of the German wedge. On February 2, the shock groups of the 26th and 4th shock armies met, the enemy was driven out from the western bank of the Danube. Then turning to the west, both armies, as well as the 135th rifle corps of the Sharokhin army, by the end of February 7, pushed the front line 25-35 km from the Danube, where, by order of the front commander, they went on the defensive.

Both opposing sides have shown a high skill in maneuvering forces, operational reserves and mobile groups. Both failed to achieve their ultimate goals. The Germans failed to release the encircled group and restore their defenses along the Danube. Enemy strikes on the outer front forced Marshal Tolbukhin on the inner front of the encirclement to go on the defensive.

The task of eliminating the enemy in Budapest fell to the 2nd Ukrainian Front. The battles for the city began on December 27 and lasted 49 days. All this time, no more than three rifle corps simultaneously participated in offensive operations. The remaining formations operated on the outer front.

Budapest, located on the routes to Austria, was turned into the most important strategic defense center, where significant forces were concentrated. Forced after December 26 to leave the second and third lines of defense, the enemy pulled the troops to Budapest, inside which up to 110 knots were built

resistance and over 200 strongholds. Basements, subways, sewers, stone buildings and fences were widely used for defense purposes.

The commander of the encircled grouping was the commander of the 9th SS Army Corps, Obergruppenführer Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, who was subordinate to the commander of the 6th Army.

Fighting in the eastern part of the city - Pest continued until January 18. The 30th Rifle and 7th Romanian Corps of the 7th Guards Army and the 18th Separate Guards Corps participated in the liquidation. They were reinforced by two rifle divisions and six heavy artillery brigades. At first, there was no unified management of them. Since January 12, all Soviet units in the eastern part of the city were subordinate to the commander of the 18th Corps, General I.M. Afonin. On January 18, Pest was completely cleared of the enemy: more than 35 thousand were destroyed and 62 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were taken prisoner.

In Buda, they fought, in addition to the 18th Guards Corps, the 37th and 75th Corps of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. On January 22, after Afonin was wounded, General Managarov took control. The fighting in Buda went from January 22 to February 13, their intensity depended on events on the external front. There were other reasons that slowed down the pace of the offensive: illiterate actions in street fighting. The dispatch officer reported to the General Staff: "The front commander attributes the protracted battles to eliminate the encircled enemy grouping to the unsatisfactory organization of the battle; forces and means are distributed evenly along the entire front; the actions of individual assault groups are not linked to each other; direct fire guns lag behind infantry battle formations; In a number of cases, checkpoints and settlements are located in premises occupied by the population of the city."

Although the offensive of the Budapest Group of Soviet Forces developed slowly, the position of the encircled group was getting worse and worse, especially since after January 26 all hopes of breaking the blockade from the outside disappeared. The command of the group, finding itself in a desperate situation, decided to break out of the encirclement with a sudden blow. On the night of February 12, up to 16 thousand German soldiers and officers with several tanks and armored personnel carriers tried to break through the battle formations of the 75th Rifle Corps in a northwestern direction, and most of them succeeded. On February 12-13, scattered remnants of enemy units in Buda were completely eliminated. The 9th SS Corps ceased to exist, consisting of the 8th Cavalry Division "Florian Geyer" and the 22nd Cavalry Division "Maria Theresa". 33,000 prisoners were taken, including General Pfeffer-Wildenbruch. Separate enemy groups that broke through into the Perbala area were destroyed by the end of February 14th.

On February 17, the Budapest Group of Forces was disbanded. In total, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the period from December 27 to February 14 destroyed up to 50 thousand and captured 138 thousand soldiers and officers.

Soviet losses in the Budapest operation amounted to 320 thousand people, including 80 thousand irrevocably, 1766 tanks and self-propelled guns, 4127 guns and mortars, 293 aircraft.

With the end of the operation, significant forces of the Soviet troops were released and conditions were created for a further offensive in the Vienna direction. The defeat of the group surrounded in Budapest created a threat to the communications of the enemy troops stationed in Yugoslavia. The German command was forced to speed up their withdrawal. An important military result of the actions of the Soviet troops under

Budapest was that they forced the German command to transfer a large number of troops, especially tank troops, to the Southwestern theater of operations.

and motorized, which were essential to repel the offensive of the Red Army in the Warsaw-Berlin direction in January-February 1945.

"As a result of the ninth strike, the Soviet troops defeated part of the forces of Army Group A, Army Group South and partially Army Group F. Almost the entire territory of Hungary was cleared of the enemy, and its new government declared war on Germany. Direct assistance was rendered to the liberation struggle of the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav peoples against the Nazi occupiers. Having defeated the fascist troops on the territory of Hungary and Yugoslavia, they prevented the occupation of Yugoslavia and other countries of the Balkan Peninsula by the Anglo-American troops, which was being prepared by the traitorous Tito clique.

The battle for Hungary raged until April 1945 and cost the Red Army 113 thousand killed and died from wounds, 290 thousand wounded.

On January 20, 1945, in Moscow, representatives of the Provisional National Government signed an armistice agreement, which basically repeated the terms of the armistice with Romania and Bulgaria.

After the war, the Soviet troops continued the occupation of Hungary, "the command during this period, along with administrative measures to establish order in the rear of the army, paid great attention to the ideological struggle against the intensifying reaction, deploying it through the administration and party organizations in such a way as to prevent interference in internal affairs Hungary". And internal affairs were managed, of course, by the communists. The Communist Party was headed by a group of functionaries who arrived from the Moscow emigration, headed by Matiyash Rakosi. Unlike the aboriginal communists who remained in the country during the war years, they, having spent many years away from their homeland and not knowing the Hungarian reality, were sure that the people were only waiting for them, they only dreamed of the proletarian dictatorship of the 1919 model.

The first ten years of the existence of the Hungarian People's Republic became the years of civil war, the ruthless destruction of everything thinking, rampant spy mania and red terror. A brief recent history of the country in the publications of that time looked something like this:

"During the first post-war elections to the National Assembly (November 4, 1945), the Hungarian reaction, inspired by the American-British imperialists, used for its own purposes the party of small farmers ("The small farmer," Lenin taught, "is the main enemy of Soviet power"), representing the kulaks, as well as part of the middle peasants and the intelligentsia. The leading posts in this party ended up in the hands of the enemies of the democratic development of Hungary, the agents of American-British imperialism...by sabotaging the purge of the state apparatus of fascist elements and appointing foreign spies to responsible posts, the reactionaries tried to prevent the democratization of the country...

In December 1946, state security agencies uncovered a conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the republic and restoring the fascist dictatorship... The conspirators intended to carry out an armed coup in the spring of 1947...

Arrested on February 25, 1947 for espionage against the Soviet Army and organizing underground terrorist groups that committed the murders of Soviet military personnel, B. Kovacs, the general secretary of the party of small farmers, turned out to be one of the leaders of the conspiracy. It soon became clear that other party leaders were involved in the conspiracy...

The reactionary forces were concentrated in several opposition parties (then

there are parties that did not accept the model of social development proposed by the communists) that acted in contact with each other ...

On November 20, 1947, at the insistence of the Hungarian people, the Pfeiffer fascist party, which was an open agent of the American imperialists, was disbanded. Pfeiffer himself, fearing exposure for espionage and subversion, fled Hungary...

In June 1948, the split in the Hungarian labor movement was eliminated. After the cleansing of the Social Democratic Party from. exposed at that time part of the reactionary elements and right-wing splitters of the labor movement, who turned into agents of the Anglo-American imperialists, it became possible to unite this party with the communist one (from that moment on, the government officially became known as the dictatorship of the proletariat) ...

In December 1948-February 1949, an underground espionage monarchist organization led by an American spy, Cardinal Mindszenty, was exposed and neutralized. This organization aimed, with the help of the American imperialists, to overthrow the democratic system and restore the Habsburg monarchy. After the flight from the country of Barankovich and the self-dissolution of his party, compromised by connections with the Mindszenty clique, anti-people parties ceased to exist in Hungary. (Since 1949, all parties have either been banned or ceased to exist on their own. In official literature, this process was called the "withering away of parties" ...)

In the summer of 1949, another adventure of the American-British imperialists and their Tito agents was exposed, who, with the help of a gang of spy and provocateur Raik (secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union, who spent the war in the underground and in prisons, unlike the leaders who had spent time in Moscow), tried to get into leadership positions, to deprive the Hungarian people of freedom and independence ... The Rajk trial, which took place in September 1949, revealed the intentions of the imperialist warmongers to achieve, with the help of the fascist Tito clique, the restoration of reactionary regimes in the people's democracies ... The exposure and liquidation of the Rajk gang strengthened the unity of the Hungarian Party working people and the entire Hungarian people, increased their revolutionary vigilance (at the trial, inspired by the Kremlin, all the accused gave the necessary testimony; 14 people were sentenced to death, 78 to long prison terms) ...

On September 30, 1949, the Hungarian People's Republic terminated the treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance concluded with Yugoslavia in 1947. The Hungarian government expelled from Hungary Tito's spies, who worked as diplomatic representatives and carried out subversive work against people's democracy (Tito dared to disobey Comrade Stalin and in 1948 was anathematized as an agent of imperialism) ...

Preparations for the 70th anniversary of the birth of the leader of all progressive mankind I.V. Stalin caused a powerful labor upsurge in the cities and villages of Hungary. The celebration of a significant date on December 21, 1949 resulted in a demonstration of boundless gratitude and love of the Hungarian people for the Soviet Union and the leader of the workers I.V. Stalin."

Stages of a long way to "genuine democracy"! The fascist dictatorship of Salashi was replaced by the Bolshevik dictatorship of Rakosi.

The activities of the loyal Leninists-Stalinists eventually caused a people's revolution in the fall of 1956, which was drowned in blood with the help of the Soviet Army. Our tankers again had to "liberate" Budapest, put a new one on the throne,

appointed by Khrushchev, the Hungarian government, which first of all sentenced the previous cabinet of Imre Nagy to hanging. The courts for the cases of participants in the uprising worked non-stop until 1962.

In the 60-80s, the Hungarians called their country "the most cheerful barracks of the socialist camp." "Barak" was appointed for demolition only in the spring of 1990.

TENTH STALIN IMPACT

"... was inflicted in October by the troops of the Karelian Front in cooperation with the ships and units of the Northern Fleet in the Arctic (in the Pechenga region)"

After the defeat of the enemy troops on the Karelian Isthmus and in South Karelia and the subsequent withdrawal of Finland from the war, favorable conditions were created for the expulsion of the invaders from the Soviet Arctic.

In October 1944, in the Far North, in a strip of about 60 km, the 19th Mountain Rifle Corps of the 20th Mountain Army of General Rendulich defended. The corps consisted of 3 divisions and 3 infantry brigades, 53,000 soldiers and officers, 750 guns and mortars.

The German command demanded that its troops hold their lines at all costs and thus retain sources of important strategic raw materials, especially nickel, copper and molybdenum, as well as ice-free northern ports, based on which large forces of the German fleet could conduct active operations. on Soviet sea lanes.

By the autumn of 1944, the front line here ran from the Malaya Volokovaya Bay along the isthmus of the Sredny Peninsula and further to the Bolshaya Zapadnaya Litsa Bay to the lakes Chapr and Koshkayarv. For three years, the Germans created a strong defense here, consisting of three lanes to a depth of 150 km. The northern flank of the position rested on the sea, the southern flank - in a completely impassable terrain for the troops, which excluded a bypass maneuver. The basis of the main strip was made up of strongholds and nodes of resistance with the presence of long-term structures, trenches of a full profile, mine and wire barriers. The strongholds had a large number of concrete firing structures, observation posts and heavy dugouts built of iron, stone and granite. Part of the machine-gun nests and shelters were built in the rocks, which reliably sheltered personnel from heavy shells and aerial bombs. The gaps between the strongholds were hard-to-reach areas of the terrain, which were blocked by artillery mortar fire, engineering barriers and controlled by observation and patrolling.

The second line of defense was prepared at the turn of the Titovka River, 10-25 km from the front line. Strongholds here intercepted all the most important directions, mainly roads. On the western bank of the Petsamojoki River, the Germans erected a rear defensive line with field-type fortifications. The basis of this frontier was the settlements of Petsamo and Luostari, adapted for all-round defense, turned into powerful centers of resistance. In order to cover the area of nickel mining, fortifications were created along the Luostari-Nikel road.

On the main and second lanes, the defense was occupied by units of the 2nd and 6th mountain rifle divisions. The 136th Regiment of Jaegers from the 2nd Division was stationed in Luostari. Parts of the 210th Infantry Division were concentrated in the Nikel area and to the north. Infantry

brigades controlled the coast of the Barents Sea.

Up to 100 aircraft of the 5th Air Fleet were based at airfields in the Luostari and Salmijärvi areas. In the ports of Northern Norway there were significant forces of the German fleet - the battleship "TGirpits", 14 destroyers, more than 30 submarines, 50

patrol ships.

The Stavka entrusted the task of defeating German troops in the Arctic to the Karelian Front under the command of Meretskov and the Northern Fleet, commanded by Admiral A.G. Golovko. The 14th Army of Lieutenant General V.I. was involved in the direct participation in the operation, called the Petsamo-Kirkenesskaya. Shcherbakov - 8 rifle divisions, 1 fortified area, 5 infantry and a separate tank brigade, 2 tank and 2 heavy self-propelled artillery regiments. Total: 113,200 people, 2,100 guns and mortars, about 200 tanks and self-propelled guns. The Northern Fleet allocated 6 destroyers, 8 submarines, 20 torpedo boats and 20,000 fighters. From the air, Soviet troops supported 747 aircraft of the 7th Air Army and 275 fleet aircraft.

The idea of the operation was to encircle and destroy the main forces of the 19th Mountain Rifle Corps by a deep bypass from the south and a simultaneous attack from the north. Then it was planned to capture the city of Petsamo taken from the Finns and develop an offensive to the border with Norway.

According to the plan approved by the Headquarters on September 29, the main blow was delivered by the left flank of the 14th Army on the weakest section of the German defense from the area south of Lake Chapr in the general direction of Luostari, Petsamo with the aim of reaching the rear of the main enemy grouping. On the right flank of the army, an auxiliary strike was delivered by a specially created task force with the task of pinning down enemy troops in the area from Bolshaya Zapadnaya Litsa Bay to Lake Chapr, preventing them from being transferred to the direction of the main attack, and subsequently going on the offensive in the general direction of Petsamo. In combination with the actions of marine units from the Sredny Peninsula in the direction of Petsamo, Luostari planned to surround and destroy the enemy grouping in the area southwest of the Titovka River. In order to mislead the enemy, a demonstrative landing was planned in the area of Cape Pikshuev in Motovsky Bay. Soviet submarines were supposed to block the ports of Petsamo and Kirkenes from the sea, and intensify their operations northwest of the island of Vardø.

The offensive operations of the troops were to be carried out in the impenetrable region of the Far North, where granite rocks and mountains with steep slopes and sheer cliffs, gorges and abysses alternate with swampy areas. This area is crossed by many mountain rivers and streams, small and large lakes. In addition, October turned out to be especially rainy. Heavy rainfall caused a significant rise in water in rivers, lakes and swamps. The duration of daylight hours was noticeably reduced. Due to low cloud cover, frequent and thick fogs, heavy rainfall, aviation could operate on rare days and no more than 2-3 hours a day.

The weak point of the German defense, according to the front commander, was the presence of large gaps between strong points and a limited number of anti-tank weapons. She wore, one might say, anti-personnel character. Therefore, Meretskov asked the Headquarters to provide him with a regiment of heavy KV tanks that were considered obsolete and had never been used in the North. With some bewilderment, Moscow gave the 73rd Separate Guards Tank Regiment a breakthrough. Two battalions of amphibians were allocated to overcome water barriers.

The operation began on October 8.007 with artillery preparation,

lasting 2 hours 35 minutes. Then the troops of the 14th Army went on the offensive. Overcoming the enemy's stubborn resistance, the 131st Rifle Corps, with the forces of the 14th Rifle Division, broke through the enemy's main line of defense by 15:00. The main burden of the fighting that day fell on the infantry and escort guns, as attached tanks and divisional artillery lagged behind due to impassability. Due to inclement weather, aviation was almost inactive. However, the attack

developed successfully. Parts of the 14th division, chest-deep in icy water, crossed Titovka on the move and captured a number of strongholds on the second line of German defense. The situation was more complicated in the band of the 99th Rifle Corps, Major General S.P. Mikulsky. Rising to the attack, the rifle units of the first echelon, having fallen under heavy fire, lay down. Then the commander decided to conduct a night attack, which began exactly at midnight. By 8 am the infantry had captured the front line of the enemy. At the same time, without encountering resistance, the 126th light rifle corps under the command of Colonel V.N. crossed through Titovka. Solovyov, followed by the 127th light rifle corps of Major General G.A. Zhukov, who, along the impassable tundra, began a deep detour from the south of the open flank of the enemy. All heavy weapons were loaded onto horses and deer.

By the end of the day, the troops of the armies broke through the defense in a sector up to 6 km along the front and up to 8 km in depth. A day later, they captured the second strip on the front up to 20 km. The 126th Corps, having passed 30 km in conditions of complete impassability and difficult terrain, by the end of October 8, was 12 km south of Luostari. This created a real threat to the main forces of the 19th German Corps, located north of Lake Chapr. In this regard, the German command ordered the withdrawal of its units from the area of Western Litsa along the road to Petsamo.

On the evening of October 9, Meretskov specified the combat missions to his subordinates. From the morning of the next day, Shcherbakov's army continued offensive operations. The troops of the shock group operated in two directions isolated from each other: one group struck to the north, in the direction of Petsamo, the other to the west, to Luostari. The light corps, providing the left flank, continued to maneuver around with the aim of reaching the area west of Luostari. As the Soviet troops advanced into the depths of the defense, enemy resistance intensified. The struggle for every height, especially for roads, was of a long and stubborn nature. The actions of the troops developed in a complex, rapidly changing environment. On October 9, the 131st Rifle Corps captured a number of heavily fortified heights and by the morning of the next day advanced units reached the area of Lake Kakkurinyarvi, cut the Murmansk-Petsamo road, and thereby blocked the enemy's only escape route to the west.

Using the success of the main grouping, they switched to active operations of the Marine Corps. On the night of October 10, ships of the Northern Fleet on 30 boats landed the 63rd Marine Brigade - 2837 people - in the Malaya Volokovaya Bay area without hindrance. In the morning, the 12th Marine Brigade launched an offensive from the Sredny Peninsula. Soon, its units connected with the landing force and launched a joint attack on Petsamo. To avoid complete encirclement, the German units defending on the isthmus of the Sredny Peninsula began a hasty retreat in a southwestern direction. On the same day, the troops operating in the auxiliary direction proceeded to pursue the enemy, who was retreating from the Bolshaya Zapadnaya Litsa area. Parts of the corps, overcoming engineering barriers and weak resistance from the rearguards of the 6th Mountain Rifle Division and the 388th Infantry Brigade, successfully advanced west.

In the area of Lake Kakkurinjärvi, fierce battles unfolded at that time. During October 10, the Germans launched several counterattacks, but the Soviet units successfully repelled all enemy attempts to break through to the west. However, on October 11, the Germans managed to push the 131st Rifle Corps away from the road and

withdraw the remnants of their troops to Petsamo.

The 99th Rifle Corps, having defeated the enemy in a number of strongholds, reached the near approaches to Luostari and repelled fierce German counterattacks for a day. The 126th Corps continued its off-road detour and by the morning of October 10 had saddled a fork in the road 9 km west of the city. Fierce battles ensued here.

units of the 163rd Infantry Division, hastily transferred to this area by the German command from the 36th Army Corps.

On October 12, the troops of the 99th and 127th light rifle corps crossed the Petsamojoki River from the move and captured Luostari and the airfield located south of this settlement with strikes from the east, south and west. In these battles, the 2nd mountain rifle division of General Degen was almost completely surrounded and destroyed.

This created favorable conditions for the development of a further offensive to the west, in the direction of Nikel, and for an attack on Petsamo from the south. Taking into account the current situation, the German command set the task of units of the 163rd Infantry Division to push the Soviet troops back to the eastern coast of Petsamojoki and return Luostari. At the same time, units of the 210th Infantry Division were transferred to strengthen the defense in the Petsamo area.

Successfully repulsing the hopeless counterattacks of the 163rd Infantry Division by part of the forces, the Soviet troops from the Luostari region, having brought the 7th Guards Tank Brigade into battle, dealt a strong blow in the direction of Petsamo. Solovyov's corps cut the Petsamo-Tarnet road.

To speed up the liberation of Petsamo, on the evening of October 12, a detachment of sailors consisting of 658 people under the command of Major I.A. was landed in the port of Linahamari. Timofeev. As landing craft, 10 torpedo boats and 2 small hunters were used. Another 2 torpedo boats were assigned to blow up booms at the entrance to the Petsamovouono fjord. The boats quickly overcame the zone intensively fired upon by the enemy and broke into the bay. By 24 hours, the landing was completed, and the sailors immediately launched an attack on the stronghold, covering the firing position of the 210-mm battery. The battles for Linahamari were fierce and often turned into hand-to-hand combat. Under the onslaught of the paratroopers, the Germans were forced to retreat. On October 13, the port of Linahamari was cleared of enemy troops, and the landing force reached the near approaches to Petsamo from the north. By the end of October 14, the 131st Rifle Corps approached the city from the south, in the west the 72nd Marine Brigade controlled the situation.

On the night of October 15, the troops of the Karelian Front, in close cooperation with units of the marines and ships of the Northern Fleet, defeated the German garrison with a strike in converging directions and captured the city and port of Petsamo - an important naval base and a powerful stronghold of the enemy's defense in the Far North.

The remnants of the defeated units of the 19th Mountain Rifle Corps and the 163rd Infantry Division, hiding behind strong rearguards, retreated west along the roads to Tarnet, Akhmalakhti, Nikel. Retreating, they blew up bridges and road pipes, broke roadside rocks and filled up passages, mined roads, roadsides, mountain defiles. The German command sought to break away from persecution and organize a strong defense of the Kirkenes and Nikel regions in order to ensure the evacuation of its units, military equipment and industrial equipment through the ports of Northern Norway.

Over the following days, Soviet troops continued to clear

liberated territory from small enemy groups, brought ammunition and food, pulled up artillery and rear, and also regrouped units to solve new problems. The main one is access to the border with Norway. The main efforts of the troops were concentrated on capturing the large settlements of Nikel, Akhmalakhti, and Salmiyarvi. The fresh 31st Rifle Corps of Major General M. Absalyamov was transferred to the new frontier ...

On the morning of October 18, the troops of the front in the direction of the main attack resumed the offensive. The Germans, with retreating units, occupied all the strongholds in advance,

located along the roads, controlling the approaches to them with artillery and machine-gun fire. Roads and important lines were heavily mined. The strongholds were located, as a rule, at dominant heights and, well equipped in engineering terms, were a kind of small fortresses.

The troops advancing along the road to Akhmalakhti, skillfully using a roundabout maneuver, defeated the enemy in strong points and on October 22 reached the border with Norway on a front of 20 km. Along the Nickel road, the advancing troops met stubborn resistance, but, having made their way through the impassability, by the end of October 20, they captured Nikel in a semicircle and two days later destroyed the garrison and occupied the village. In the auxiliary direction, by October 21, the advancing units had cleared the area northwest of Petsamo from the enemy.

The Northern Fleet, to cover the right flank of the army, landed two landing forces, deploying operations east of Vuoremi along the coast of the Varanger Fjord.

Upon learning of the withdrawal of his troops to the Norwegian border, the front commander immediately reported to Stalin and asked permission to cross it. At the same time, he reported on his thoughts on the mastery of Kirkenes. "Frankly speaking," recalls Meretskov, "along with the consent, I expected to hear all sorts of instructions regarding the political line of behavior of the troops. The answer of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the question asked was very short: "That would be good!"

Soviet troops entered the borders of Norway and by the end of October 22 they reached the eastern shore of the Jarfjord Bay, having captured the settlement of Tarnet. Meretskov set the 14th Army the task of developing the offensive in the northwestern and southwestern directions, capturing the cities and ports of Kirkenes and Neiden, and reaching the Nautsi area. On October 24, the troops of the front, after a short preparation, began to carry out the final stage of the operation, striking in divergent directions. The strongest grouping attacked Kirkenes from the east and south. The second group of troops continued to pursue the enemy in the direction of the city of Neiden. Formations of the third group from the area of Akhmalakhti, Nikel struck along the Norwegian border in the direction of Nautsi.

Destroying to the ground all the most important military-economic facilities, along with residential buildings, the rangers rolled back to the west.

Shcherbakov's troops moved forward, as a rule, along the roads in light units or specially created mobile detachments, overcoming the slight resistance of small enemy groups, operating mainly from ambushes. Stubborn, fierce battles flared up for Kirkenes itself. The Germans managed to pull up artillery to the city and take the fortifications on the adjacent heights. They blew up the railway bridge across the Jarfjord, destroyed the railway connecting Kirkenes with the mining area, mined all the routes convenient for the movement of troops.

On October 23, the Northern Fleet landed a landing party in the amount of 608 people on the coast of the Kobholm fjord Bay, which occupied a settlement 17 km north of the city with a blow to the flank. The right-flank group of the front at that time launched an offensive on Kirkenes. The troops of the front, advancing from the south, completed the detour of Kirkenes from the southwest and reached the road to the west of it. On October 25, the 131st Rifle Corps, in cooperation with the 99th Corps, with the support of the landing of the Northern Fleet, under heavy fire on amphibians, fishing boats and improvised means crossed the fjord and captured the city of Kirkenes destroyed by the Germans, while capturing a large amount of military equipment, large ammunition depots and other material resources. On October 27, the 126th light rifle corps cleared the city of Neiden from the Germans, and the 31st corps entered the Nautsi area.

The 19th German mountain rifle corps, having suffered heavy losses, hastily retreated to the west, into the depths of Norway, and entrenched itself near the Lyngen fjord.

October 27, 1944 Meretskov was awarded the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

By expelling the Germans from Kirkenes and reaching the line of Neiden, Nautsi, the 14th Army and the Northern Fleet completed their tasks in the Petsamo-Kirkenes operation. Further advancement militarily was considered unpromising. Ahead lay a narrow desert, mountainous strip of land, all cut up by fjords. The polar night was approaching. Heavy snowfalls began, almost insurmountable blockages appeared on the roads. Intelligence sent from Neiden to the northwest reported that moving forward was fraught with enormous difficulties, and that there was no enemy. Meretskov reported this to Stalin on October 29.

In addition, it was very problematic and politically. As early as May 16, 1944, England, the USA and the USSR signed an agreement with the Norwegian government in London, assuming obligations to fully respect the sovereignty of Norway. According to this agreement, civil power in the liberated territories passed to the Norwegian government as soon as the military situation allowed it. The Western allies, who in 1942 hatched the project of the North Norwegian operation "Jupiter", were no longer going to waste their energy on the liberation of the "peripheral" country, when the fate of the war and the future structure of the world were decided in the center of Europe. The clearing of the Germans from the territory of northeastern Finnmark was a local military operation carried out with the consent of the Norwegian government in the interests of the Red Army, which finally liquidated the Soviet-German front in the Arctic.

The loss of Petsamo and Kirkenes sharply limited the actions of the enemy fleet on the Soviet northern communications and deprived Germany of the opportunity to receive nickel ore. According to Meretskov's report: "The enemy left only 28,450 soldiers and officers killed on the battlefield. 1649 prisoners were captured... 119 different enemy ships were sunk by the ships of the Northern Fleet, 20 enemy ships were damaged. If we take into account that the number of wounded exceeded the number of those killed by 3-4 times, it turns out that the German corps was completely destroyed, and twice. Nevertheless, these figures, without any critical reflection, were included in all historical sources.

As for the Northern Fleet, it did not sink so many ships in the whole of 1944. Sailors from the North Sea knew how to "poison" no worse than their Black Sea counterparts. For example, four times Soviet submarines broke into the port of Linahamari and, according to the reports of their commanders (I.I. Fisanovich, E.N. Egorov, V.G. Starikov), sank at least 4 enemy transports. What a surprise it was when Soviet divers, who carefully examined the entire water area of the port, did not find a single "destroyed" vessel at the bottom. A completely anecdotal incident with the M-172 submarine is connected with the same Linahamari, when Lieutenant Commander D.Ya.

Lysenko, having planted his submarine on the rocks, decided that the Germans used a secret weapon in the form of magnets, pulling the boat to the surface.

The main forces of the 20th mountain army, simply pushed out of the Arctic, survived and retained their combat effectiveness. Part of it was immediately evacuated by sea. A large mass of troops reached the ports of Southern Norway by land and was transported to Germany, having managed to take part in the battles for the Rhine and Berlin.

The losses of the Soviet troops from October 7 to 29 amounted to 21,233 people killed and wounded, 21 tanks, 40 guns and mortars, 62 aircraft.

“As a result of this operation, the native Russian region of Pechenga was liberated; Soviet troops entered Norway, providing assistance

Norwegian people in the liberation of the country from the Nazi invaders. With the capture of the two most important naval bases in the Far North - Pechenga and Kirkenes - the security of Murmansk and the northern maritime communications of the Soviet Union was ensured.

On November 8, a Norwegian military mission under the Soviet command, a detachment of Norwegian troops, the Norwegian military and civil administration in Finnmark, and later from Sweden, units of the Norwegian military police and a detachment of the Navy arrived on the first piece of liberated Norwegian land through Murmansk. On the territory of Northern Norway, the formation of units from the local population began. The Norwegian troops were assigned to the 14th Army for all types of material support and were temporarily subordinate to the Soviet command. The future great traveler Thor Heyerdahl served as a junior officer in their composition.

On November 15, 1944, the Karelian Front was disbanded. The 7th Army, transformed into the 9th Guards, went to Hungary, the 19th Army soon became part of the 2nd Belorussian Front, the army of General Shcherbakov, transformed into the 14th Separate Army, remained in Norway until May 1945. Soviet troops were engaged in demining buildings and enterprises, restoring piers, roads and bridges, building hospitals, catering and medical care to the population, surprising the Scandinavians with their unpretentiousness. For example, in Kirkenes, out of 220 residential buildings, only 28 survived, and in the conditions of polar November, the soldiers had to huddle right in the field. In addition, the command was ordered "not to occupy a single house or building belonging to the Norwegian population", and also "to be scrupulous in order to prevent any violation of the private property rights of Norwegian citizens and firms."

The Norwegian Minister of Justice T. Vold, who at that time made a trip to the liberated areas, reported to his government in London: "In the evenings, you could see hundreds of small fires around which soldiers slept. We saw few tents. Thanks to such amazing endurance, the Soviet troops provided the Norwegian population with the opportunity to use the few houses that survived the general destruction.

In the Petsamo region taken from the Finns, all bourgeois property immediately became "people's", that is, it was nationalized without delay. Norway was ordered to be considered a foreign territory, so here they tried their best to make a favorable impression on the "foreign" and its citizens, out of habit not sparing their own.

“So, despite the enormous need for forests,” he reported in

The political department of the Red Army, the head of the political department of the 14th Army, Colonel Grigorovich, - the lumber available in the warehouse of the Sydvaranger joint-stock company was not used for the needs of the army due to the fact that, according to the company, it needs these materials itself.

That is, the soldiers could build their own housing and a bathhouse, but the "grateful" Norwegians refused to provide forest even for money. How many building materials can be found in the tundra? And was it worth it to keep so many troops there in bestial conditions? The report, by the way, is dated February 11, 1945. These manifestations of "amazing endurance" against the backdrop of the polar night and the almost immediately outbreak of an epidemic of diphtheria and dysentery ("brought here by the Nazis" (?), A Soviet source reports) cost the army almost 10,000 people who were out of action due to illness within six months.

The total cost of the liberation mission in Finnmark was 18,162 people, including 3,436 dead and dead. The irretrievable losses of the Norwegians themselves during

World War II, including the victims of the Resistance - about 10,000 people.

The liberation of the rest of Norway took place without armed struggle. On May 8, an allied military mission flew to Oslo, which on the same evening accepted a formal surrender from the German commander, General Böhme.

RESULTS

"The great victory of the Soviet Army in 1944 was a new triumph of Stalin's most advanced military science in the world. The ten crushing blows of Stalin were distinguished by exceptional purposefulness, they were united by a wise strategic plan and the will of the Supreme Commander I.V. Stalin. In operations unprecedented in their scale, new methods of warfare and large-scale operations were applied with the greatest skill. All operations were carried out in the style of a decisive Stalinist strategy on a gigantic scale ... The Supreme Commander-in-Chief I.V. Stalin, implementing the plan of the 1944 campaign, unmistakably chose such directions of the main attacks that led to the defeat of the enemy's most important groupings and were unexpected for the enemy.

In 1944, the Soviet Armed Forces achieved outstanding successes: the territory of the USSR was completely liberated, Hitler's allies were withdrawn from the war, the Red Army went directly to the borders of the Third Reich.

Various political, economic and military factors contributed to this: the immeasurable superiority of the anti-Hitler coalition in resources, the depletion of the German potential, the growth of technical equipment and, most importantly, significant qualitative changes in the Red Army, the invaluable assistance provided to the Soviet Union by the allies (Hitler, on the contrary, had to spend to arm the Hungarian and Romanian soldiers), opening a second front in Europe.

After the war, most of these factors were declared "bourgeois falsifications" designed to "belittle the role of the USSR" in the overall victory. And most importantly, the fact that the socialist system was the most advanced, the Soviet leadership -

the most wise and unmistakable, the Soviet military art is the most skilful, the Soviet generals are a galaxy of outstanding strategists, brought up by the Communist Party.

For example, a political worker in life, General Krainyukov, competently reports: "The operational plans of General N.F. Vatutin, like the plans of any Soviet military leader, were developed on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist theory of war and the army... military theorists.

Here is another generalization of the experience of the war: "To master the Soviet military art in the Great Patriotic War, a deep knowledge of the decisions of the congresses and conferences of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the works of V.I. Lenin and I.V. Stalin, which highlight issues related to military science, as well as the Theses of the Central Committee of the CPSU "Fifty Years of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

We have already said that the vast majority of Soviet

military leaders in the first period of the war demonstrated their professional unsuitability, inability to organize, train troops and competently manage them. In three years, though not all of them, they have learned a lot. True, these were three years of the most severe war and training was expensive. But not the generals.

"All these commanders learned war in war, paying for it with the blood of our people" Regimental and battalion , - Zhukov writes in an official document, but points not to himself, but to commanders and the mistakes of the General Staff, which he himself led, in training. In fact, the phrase "all these commanders" really applies to everyone - from the Supreme Commander to the squad leader.

Nevertheless, they learned. As A. Werth notes: "Over the past two years, the USSR, despite extremely heavy losses in people and military equipment, day after day created an exceptionally combat-ready, skillful and technically superbly equipped army, while Germany's reserves were steadily depleted."

The overwhelming superiority in technology and qualitative changes in organization allowed the Red Army to carry out outstanding operations in 1944 to encircle large enemy groups near Korsun-Shevchenkivsk, Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Minsk, Lvov, Yassy and Chisinau, which went down in history as examples of military art. They were proof of the growth and maturity of the fighters, officers and generals who, in the course of the war, mastered this form of strategic and operational-tactical maneuver. Numerous strategic reserves of the Supreme High Command ensured the possibility of a continuous increase in the strength of strikes during operations and their development to a greater depth.

In the field of operational art, the issues of organizing and carrying out a breakthrough in enemy defenses and forcing water barriers were successfully resolved. The art of maneuvering troops rose to a new level after the breakthrough of the defense was completed.

The tactics of the Red Army also received further development. In offensive combat, it was characterized by the rejection of linear tactics, high maneuverability, massing of forces and means in the direction of the main attack. From the summer of 1943, the troops switched to deep formation of battle formations, which led to a narrowing of the offensive zones, breakthrough areas, and an increase in tactical densities.

But this is only one side of reality, obscuring everything else. Marshal of Artillery N.D. Yakovlev writes about this: "Unfortunately, most of them, that is, articles, conversations, memoirs, are somehow similar to each other. In many cases, they carry a touch of stale laudation to a number of military leaders, descriptions of the exploits of individual fighters, political workers, commanders, and partisans.

The inherent vices inherent in the Bolshevik system remained intact: total control, reduction of an individual to the level of a screw, neglect of the individual training of a soldier, ruthlessness towards his own soldiers.

Yes, such talented military leaders as Rokossovsky, Tolbukhin, Chernyakhovsky came to the fore in the war. But at the same time, Gordov, Sokolovsky, Maslennikov and other "lords" continued to command the armies and fronts, or, as division commander Gladkov calls them, "chiefs of a different type":

"... for them, the lower commander was an empty place, in extreme cases, a cog in the iron mechanism of obedience: tighten the screws and that's it! One of these commanders, General Maslennikov, made me go through a lot...

Today he orders one division to attack, tomorrow another, giving no time at all to organize the battle. And, of course, we suffered unnecessary losses. Maslennikov threatened, punished people, apparently thinking in this way to win the battle. No! A fight can only be won with skill.

One day it was reported from the army headquarters that the commander

group and will soon be at the command post. I was delighted, thinking that I would be able to report to the big boss the situation in my area, offer my thoughts on overcoming difficulties and receive instructions. As a new person, I needed to look around, get comfortable. And I was waiting for the boss to help me.

I didn't have to wait long... I was told that Commander Maslennikov was calling. Quickly taking a map, got into the car and drove off with the lieutenant colonel. Before reaching twenty meters, I jumped out of the car and just wanted to introduce myself to Maslennikov, when he began to honor me with all his might: "I'll take you off. I'll send you to the penal battalion. I'll shoot... Why don't you advance?"...

I stood in front of him in full uniform, and he, sitting in the car, continued dressing, and I saw not an experienced boss who could teach a subordinate how to beat the enemy on the battlefield, but a bundle of nerves, unable to control not only people, but and by yourself. It was disgusting.

Finally seizing the moment, I told Maslennikov that in order to attack, it is necessary to organize an offensive, allocate the appropriate amount of ammunition and time for preparation. The answer was no better than the beginning: "Are you going to teach me? No ammunition - go on the attack yourself! In such a situation, one could say one thing: 'I obey, go on the attack myself ...' With a heavy soul, I returned to the command post. The thought was beating in my head: is it really that we have been taught military affairs for years in vain, is it really that no one will understand that you can't trust the fate of the troops to such people, that the losses that our units suffer depend largely on such commanders who lose their heads in a difficult situation. Maslennikov was not strong in military affairs. He was transferred to the army on the eve of the war, and before that he worked in the internal affairs troops. He was not able to organize an offensive operation: he lacked knowledge and organizational talent. Then I thought that the party would figure it out, it would make sure that real leaders were at the head of the troops everywhere.

The party figured out: Maslennikov, who had an education of ten classes

external, rich experience in the NKVD and who did not know how to "organize an offensive operation", two years after the meeting described, he was appointed commander of the troops of the 3rd Baltic Front, awarded the title of Army General and Hero of the Soviet Union "for the skillful leadership of the troops and the courage shown at the same time" .

Painfully difficult, in the fight against the inertia of their own bosses and their fear of taking responsibility, new tactics were born under the vigilant supervision of the "organs". This was done mainly by the officers of the battlefield, and at the risk of their lives. Acting in accordance with pre-war regulations, it was possible to put an entire regiment in one attack, but God forbid losing even a rusty shovel "not according to instructions." The great pilot and educator of air fighters A.I. Pokryshkin landed a tribunal for his experiments. The widow of the ace, who created the tactics of the Soviet fighter aviation, says: "I especially want to talk about what Pokryshkin's new tactical developments led to. Alexander Ivanovich was accused of violating the charters of fighter aviation. He was expelled from the party, regiment lists, removed from squadron command, banned from flying, his documents for the title of Hero of the Soviet Union were withdrawn, and even transferred to a reserve regiment, which was extremely offensive for a combat pilot. And the worst thing is that a criminal case was opened against Pokryshkin. According to the laws of wartime, he was threatened with execution."

Despite the fact that he shot down the most in the regiment. Later, political instructors-entertainers will come up with a slogan: "Where Kozhedub and Pokryshkin are, there is a cover for the fascist," and then vigilant comrades could well "cover" Pokryshkin himself.

Tankers had similar problems when, at their own peril and risk, in violation of the instructions, they introduced an attack with open hatches or used

the battle formations provided for by the charter, as generals Arkhipov and Beloborodov recall.

Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, in response to censorship claims to the film "They Fought for the Motherland" about the fact that there was no place for a single Soviet general in the film, said that the colonels won the war.

And that is to say, such arguments could arise in the minds of Gordov and Mekhlis, for example: "Studying the impact on the methods of warfare of new equipment and weapons, we at the same time considered the role of the main factor ensuring military success - the role of an individual soldier . Trained?... Right! The American soldier has high fighting qualities, but there is a limit for him. Therefore, the preservation of his individual strength and the strength of the team is one of the most important tasks of the commander.

The Red Army, although it moved the war to "foreign territory", still fought with great bloodshed, "the most important task of the commander" was to carry out the order at any cost, and the "main factor" was to show mass heroism: "Until the very end of the war, the Russians, not paying attention attention to losses, they threw the infantry into the attack almost in close formations.

Its losses in 1944 amounted, according to incomplete data,

6.5 million soldiers and officers were killed and wounded, that is, like in previous years, the active army was "used up" by 100 percent. Of these, almost one and a half million irretrievably. Surpassing the Third Reich in human resources by two and a half times, the USSR began the conscription of seventeen-year-old boys at the same time as Germany. Wehrmacht losses on all fronts during the same period amounted to 1.6 million people.

German conscripts were transferred to the active army after four and six months of training, which they underwent in the reserve army. Moreover, they were distributed among the newly formed or restored divisions in the West so as to get to the front as late as possible. The Soviets rushed into battle on the move, sometimes without having time to change clothes and get weapons. In the first two years of the war, huge sacrifices were made to avoid defeat, and in the last two years, to bring victory closer.

In the operations of 1944, 23,700 Soviet tanks and self-propelled guns burned down - the highest figure in the entire war. The Wehrmacht lost 11,860 combat vehicles, but the Eastern Front accounted for slightly more than half of the armored motorized divisions (as of June 1, 26 out of 48). Tankers, not counting, were thrown into breakthroughs and unsuppressed defenses, used to close gaps in their front and storm cities, sent to deep raids without air cover and drove whole armies into swamps. The accomplishment of the Soviet "art of war" was the destruction of two tank armies in Berlin, in a hasty assault on which, in general, there was no particular military need.

The official data of the Russian General Staff on the losses of the air force is simply amazing. In 1944, losses in combat aircraft amounted to 24,800 vehicles, also the maximum for the war. But something else is shocking: of this number, only 9,700 died in battle, and 15,100 are non-combat losses. On the one hand, the Soviet military acceptance at the factories turned a blind eye to marriage, and real "flying coffins" often arrived at the front. On the other hand, the level of training of the "Stalin's falcons", especially the replenishment, still remained extremely low. Former commander of the 4th Air Army, Marshal K.A. Vershinin recalls the preparations for the Belarusian operation: "Three air divisions from the 1st Air Army arrived to us ... We learned that the 309th IAD was 60% staffed by young pilots who arrived from schools. 22 of them completed the flight program only on the Po-2 aircraft and did not fly on a combat aircraft

at all. Things were no better in the 233rd shad. It consisted of 32 young pilots. In both divisions, the personnel had a long break in hostilities.

Therefore, absolute air supremacy could not be won in 1944 either.

Soviet generals and marshals to the last preferred the shortest paths and the simplest solutions. If there were enough forces, as near Berlin, to climb ahead, they did not fool themselves by inventing a maneuver. As a matter of fact, since the autumn of 1944, all Soviet operations have been a continuous assault on the "den of the fascist beast." The outcome of the strategic operations of the Soviet troops was always ultimately decided by the overwhelming superiority in the number of personnel and the amount of military equipment.

One can boast in hindsight that the Red Army would have crushed Germany even without a second front. It's just not clear, if all 30 German tank and 17 motorized divisions and all Luftwaffe aviation ended up on the Vistula and Danube, with whom would Zhukov and Konev storm Berlin in 1945, with fifteen-year-old youths?

In conclusion, a characteristic touch. In August 1945, Dwight Eisenhower visited the Soviet Union at the invitation of Stalin. The small American delegation was greeted with great pomp, they showed signs of attention, there were many meetings, receptions and toasts. They drank for every allied leader, every marshal, every general, admiral and aviation commander present, in general, for each other and for their loved ones. Only one officer said: "I want to make a toast in honor of

the most important Russian person in World War II. Gentlemen, I propose to drink with me for an ordinary soldier of the great Red Army! Is it a coincidence that it was not Zhukov, not a Soviet marshal or general, who offered to drink for a Russian soldier, but a lieutenant of the American army?